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TALKS TO YOUNG MEN

Robert Collyer

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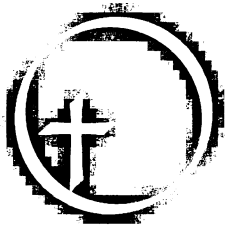

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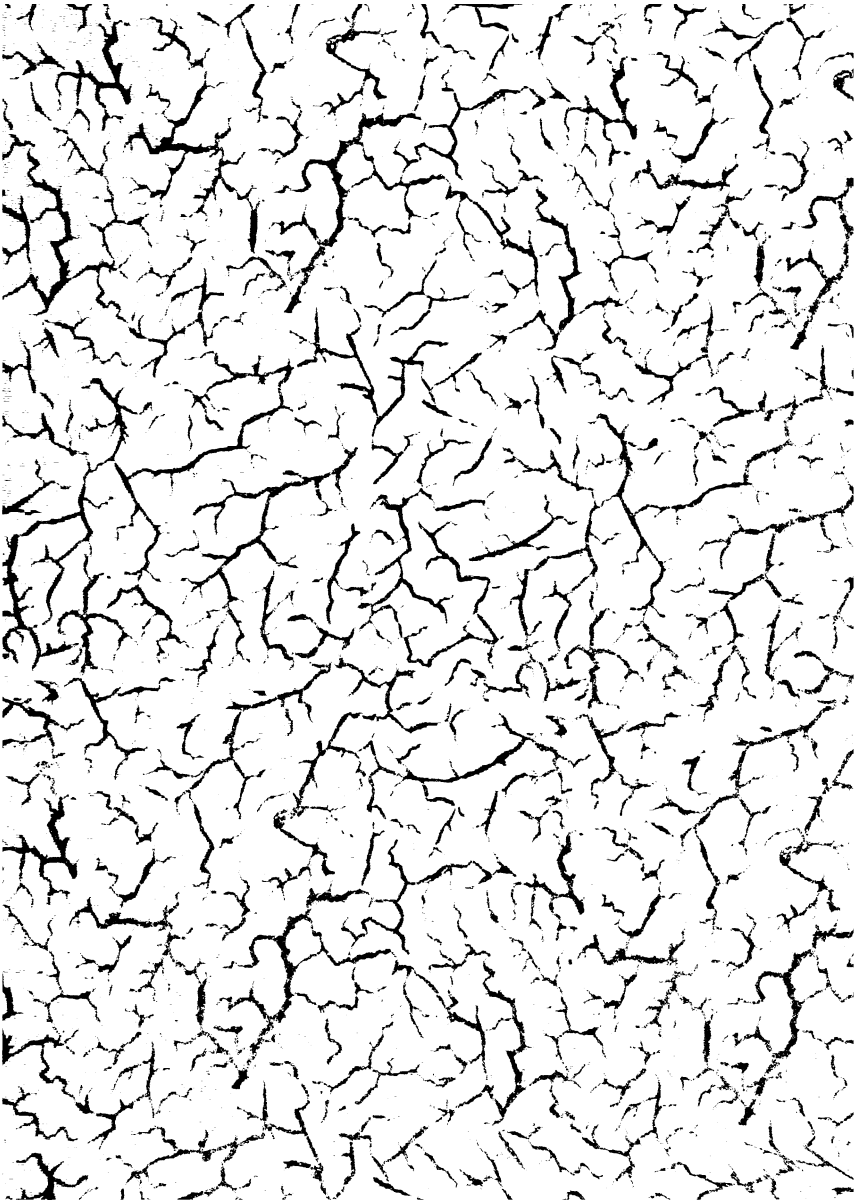

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TALKS TO YOUNG MEN

(With Asides to Young Women)

BY

ROBERT COLLYER

MINISTER OF THE CHURCH OF THE MESSIAH
NEW YORK

BOSTON
LEE AND SHEPARD PUBLISHERS
NEW YORK
CHARLES T. DILLINGHAM
1888

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TALKS TO YOUNG MEN.

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I Dedicate this Little Book

To WILLIAM H. BALDWIN

President of the Young Men's Christian Union

in Boston

With more than Twenty Years' worth of Loving Regard

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AN INTRODUCTION

"Though we are justices, and doctors, and churchmen, Master Page, we have some salt of our youth in us."

It has been said that the Koran was made, but the Bible grew; and I like to think some such distinction may be drawn in favor of this little book, no matter what may be its intrinsic quality.

It has grown out of the impulse we all feel, who are called to the ministry of "life unto life," to speak now and then to those whose life lies greatly before them, on questions which seem to us of a deep and vital moment. So I have tried to speak as the spirit moved me, and then laid these Talks away with many more to ripen or rot — as

some sorts of pears do — in my drawer; and now, when I must make good an old promise to print such a book, those have been selected which seemed still to have some soundness in them, and some virtue of bitter or sweet.

They are not to be taken, therefore, with quite the discount young men insist on usually from those who are growing old, that we have forgotten our own youth, and so are not the men best fitted now to talk to them of theirs; and there is some truth in the plea. It is such "a far cry" away back to our own early life, and we all change so greatly in the course of, let us say, fifty years, that a man may well be out of touch with those who stand now where he stood then, and be bankrupt in sympathy, even if he has grown a trifle richer in wisdom. I would fain believe this is not the gravest fault young readers will find in my little book. These are not the belated blossoms of a St. Martin's summer: they are the fruit, rather,

of the whole happy summer of my ministry, and hold, I trust, some measure of its wine.

But if it be not so, we whose heads have grown white do not think we should allow that discount when we speak to those who stand at the morning-tide, and are ready to enter the busy world we must leave when our day's work is done. At Hampton Court, in England, they have what they call a maze. It is a narrow path, with a high thick hedge of yew, if I remember, on either side, over which you cannot look. Well, they set you to walk into the heart of this maze, and then out again, and it seems simple enough as you go in; but presently you take the wrong turn, as I did, and then you wander right and left, get bewildered, lose confidence in your steps, and feel like giving up. But then you find there is a man standing on an eminence above the maze, who cries to you, "Now take that turn, and now this;" and so at last he brings you to the heart of it, and then out

again to your great content. And so, if we have won any worth out of all the years, may not this be counted with the rest, and allowed, that we stand somewhat above the maze, on this vantage-ground to which we have found our way, it may be, through much losing, alas for us! and through listening, too, for our direction, as we want our youth to listen; and cry to them also of the way they shall take into the heart of life, and then out again; and so the play of a summer's holiday becomes a parable of the maze into which we must all venture.

This is what we may be to the youth of our time, if they will hear and heed us; and this is what I would claim for worth, again, in these pages. My own life has lain in hard and rough places, as well as in these which are all my heart can desire, and I have spoken from the centre, touching many things one must touch delicately and with due reserve. "There goes John Newton, but for God's

grace," Cowper's old friend said when he saw a poor wretch one day in dire trouble; and so I think not seldom when I see such sights, and grow pitiful in thanksgiving. It is the one word more which may be one too many. I have had to rough it, as we say, and to learn after all, in other ways, what my old schoolmaster failed to teach me, I was *such* a dunce, that some problems must be solved by what he called "the double position, or rule of false;" and what I have learned touching our life in its youth and earlier prime, I have tried to tell in these Talks to young men — with asides to young women.

New York, Nov. 16, 1887.

TALKS TO YOUNG MEN

I

The Joy of Youth

Eccles. xi. 7-10

WE may fairly assume that the Preacher is thinking of youth as a quality rather than a time in our life, in the last part of this sad sermon; and when he has called up the memories of his own lost youth, as I take it, he draws a picture of his own old age, drifting slowly down to death, thinks of what he was then, and what he is now, and cries, "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth!" — in the clear glance of the eye of it, and the sure tramp of the foot, in the healthy sleep which comes then, and the cheerful waking, in the

unworn power of it, and the steady nerve, and in its sunny hopes and expectations. Rejoice in thy *youth*, for the time is coming to you, which has come to me, when your eyes will grow dim, and desire fail; when you will wake up at the twitter of the sparrow to long and dreary days, and your life will be no longer like an April day in which sunshine chases shadow, but like the setting-in of winter when the clouds return after the rain.

And I suppose few men have ever lived who could say such words as these with a deeper insight of their truth than this sad old king. His own life opened with as fair a promise, and was filled with a joy as fine, as ever fell to the lot of a young man in any age or country. His father was a poet, a warrior, and a king, — a man who had struck the harp to deathless numbers, touched the national banner with a new *glory, and* given an enduring splendor to

the throne. His father's son was the darling of the nation, once in the first fair prime of his days, with a treasury full of gold and silver, with councillors full of wisdom, with a keen and eager heart for what we have come to call the true, the beautiful, and the good; and with all this, in these early times, a simple and humble reliance on God, worthy the soul of a saint.

Well, about forty years pass away, as nearly as we can guess; and then he writes this sermon, as the traditions run, one of the saddest that ever came out of the human heart. His joy has vanished; knowledge has eaten the heart out of his faith; and we hear no more of the prayers which rise with such an exquisite grace from the youth who would always wait on God for direction and trust him for wisdom. Superstition has set up her idols where religion built her altars, and a brooding sadness has taken the place of the old strong joy. The

judgment of earth and heaven has gone against him in these forty years, and he knows that better than any other living man; and so he moans, as he opens his great sad sermon, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity."

But now as he draws to his conclusion, he pulls himself together, as we say, and says, "*No*, that is not true: ruined as I am, and base, I will not lie to my own soul. Some things are not vanity, after all; and one of these is the lost youth I have been looking at through the glass of time. Vanity has come out of my manhood; but God gave me that youth for as lovely a verity as his hand ever made, and I alone have to answer for turning the fruit of it to ashes on the lips of my old age. I must not go back on that fair vision. I cannot be such an utter fool as to call white, black. I know it was bright and good, and all the more I know it when I think of what I

was and what I am. That glory on the face of Nature then was the true revelation of her life: this gray monotony is only her shroud.

"That joy of my youth, in which I went and came, slept and woke, planned and wrought, and sang out of my heart as a bird sings; the love with which I loved one woman for love's sake, saw myself in the eyes of her children, made my home beautiful and clean, and the power by which I kept order to the utmost line of my kingdom, — these were all good and true, and will be though I should die crying, 'There is no God.' It is no proof that these gifts were not good, because evil has come in their wake to one poor old man; and so the youth of the world shall know, from one who can tell the story from the heart of a sore and sad experience, how the way opens here toward glory or shame. Therefore, rejoice, O young man, in thy youth,

and let thine heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and the sight of thine eyes; but know thou that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment."

But if the Preacher had said no such word as this, of the joy there is in a fresh young life clean and pure as his own was once, the loss would have only lain in his sermon. Because, to rejoice in our youth, no matter what we may say who mourn after "the tender light of a day that is dead," is as natural as it is for the land to rejoice in the May sun, the birds in their building and brooding, and all things that run and fly in the outbreak of their imprisoned instincts when life rises to spring-tide.

There is a lovely chapter to be read between the lines in the early history of New England, of the way the youth there fought for its innocent and harmless joy, against the *stern and* austere rule of the elder men and

ministers who had come to look on such things as quite beneath the heed of immortal souls that were trying to solve the problems of "Providence, foreknowledge, will, and fate." The joy will break out all the same, into the bloom of a new ribbon or vest; into profane music by and by, and the singing of old ballads under the breath; and into stolen walks of a young man and maid on a Sunday before sundown, that they may tell the old sweet story to each other when they ought to be hearing the minister holding forth on the wrath of God. In junketings again as time went on, and even a dance at some outlying farm where the farmer and his wife of the later emigration held on to the cheerful traditions of the old motherland, thought no harm of innocent amusements, and so would risk a good deal that the young folks might be young. The masters of the strongholds of the stern Puritan spirit could never prevent these outbreaks

of the joy of youth, any more than they could prevent the purple and gold on the breast of the doves, or the song of the birds in the elms, or the rush of the spring floods; and for very much the same reason. It was spring with those they would affront; Nature was bidding them rejoice in many ways the ministers and selectmen could not or would not understand: and so it was like trying to fight the rainbow. Nor, at a later day, could the Society of Friends master these joyous instincts and outbreaks, whether they took these lighter forms, or the loftier forms of poetry and music; for when Nature says one thing and even what we may call Religion another, and the law of the church or the sect crosses that of "all out doors," you need not ponder the question as to which is bound to win in the long fight, — the law laid down by Calvin, Roger Williams, George Fox, or John Wesley, on the one hand, or *this joy* of youth on the other, pulsing

through the heart of the new generation. Only the immutable can stand, and this joy is immutable as the light of heaven; and so those who would fight it in any innocent form it may choose to take, have first to settle the question whether they are not fighting against God.

I would say, then, it is no use asking whether this man was wise, or a fool, for obeying this instinct of his youth to rejoice in what was within and all about him. His joy in books and music, in the making of fair gardens, and in collecting rare treasures of art; in his wife and children, his home, temple, and government, and in wit and humor, — for, Hebrew as he was, he must have had some turn that way too, or he could never have solved that problem of the two mothers, in which one detects a grain of both, — these in themselves were not the wayward freaks of a young man's folly. They were good, true things in their

degree then, as they are now; not vanities, but verities, and not things well used that would make a man wish he was dead and done with it. They were indeed the very same things Sydney Smith, a wiser man than Solomon, found among the joys of his youth, and good to him still and true when he wrote to a friend, "I am seventy-four years old, and am, upon the whole, a happy man. I have found this an interesting world to live in, and am thankful to Providence for my lot." A wiser man than Solomon, I say again, in despite of the catechism; for in the crucible of the one life you find dust and ashes when old age draws on, and in the other the fine gold of gratitude and a sweet content.

Now, then, where shall we look for the reasons which turned a youth of pure sweetness to an old age of gall? and how came that which began in hope to end in despair?

And I answer, in this first of all, that in

the eager hunger of his youth, and the pushing-out of his genius, he tried to do too many things to do any one supremely well; so that, while the idea of the way each one ought to be done held itself high and clear in his soul, the doing fell so far short of it as to leave a sense of failure in the whole endeavor. In this so far, however, I think he was not to blame; it is the fault, but not the sin, of youth, to be stricken with the fever of untried powers, and to feel as I remember I felt when I was let loose for the first time to browse in a great library. There were so many books I wanted to read, that night came on, and I had not read a whole chapter in any one of them; and something like this was the trouble with this young man. Perhaps he might have sung psalms equal to those of his royal father, — he only sang the Song of Solomon; or prophesied, — but he only preached, and collected proverbs. In some one thing, or it may be more than one, he

might have flamed out into a supreme excellence. He flatted out into a few degrees above commonplace; and the best thing he has left us — this sad sermon — is, in some sense, the worst. It was with him, indeed, as some one has said it was with Brougham, who also came to something like our Preacher's spirit in his old age: "He could have done any one of ten things better than any other man in England, but he insisted on doing the whole ten." Now, do we wonder over Schaeffer's "Faust and Margaret"? He wrought thirty years of his life into those wonderful designs. Or over Mozart's music? "If few have equalled me in my art," he said, "fewer still have studied it with such untiring zeal." And here, to my mind, is one root of this young man's trouble. The joy of youth was in him, and pricked him on to try this and that; but, king as he was, he could not command the perfection his soul called for, because he would *not pay* the price old Carlyle told the young

men in Glasgow he had always paid for any worthy work he had ever done, — hard, stern labor, which had made him actually sick in his body, so ruthless was the soul of him to do it well. No such ruthlessness touches us in this noble young king. It is an amateur and *dilettante* way he has of doing things in those days, if the Song of Songs gives us any insight of his methods.

And so it is, that, as we only get out of any endeavor a worth in proportion to that we put into it, we are not to wonder that he should cry at last, "What has a man of all his labor under the sun?" For this gradual selection of some one thing to do and to be is pretty sure to lead a young man on to the second line this man failed to reach, and, in failing there, drifted on to the third and last; and that is the sacredness which invests any worthy work in the end, so that this shall not be one thing and your religion another; but, as the good Methodist woman said she

never missed the corners in sweeping a room when she said that Scripture, "Create in me a clean heart, O God!" so you shall find that your work and your religion always meet and tie. "I keep up my heart," Kepler said one grim day, "with the thought that I serve not the emperor, but the whole human race." And I suspect there is some such fine wholeness in whatever we do in this spirit, right down to sweeping a room or the streets. Wholeness and oneness, each and all, the red-cloaked clown and the emperor; Beethoven, in the little church at Godesberg, touching the new organ to such a holy (whole) purpose of a week-day morning, that the peasant women could not scrub the floor for delight and wonder, and then the better scrubbing from the line where they paused to listen to the matchless music.

If this man, then, had caught out of the joy of his youth and his unworn powers some one thing to do, and had drawn on his whole

manhood for the power to do it well, to put heart and life into it without stint or stay, then heart and life would have come out of it, and the thing would have grown sacred, so that he could have afforded to look at it from the uttermost verge of life with joy. He could have felt about it as Wordsworth felt about some of his poems when Southey said, "If you will alter them in such and such a way, you will win both fame and fortune." He had neither then; but he said, "That is the true way, and I will die unheard rather than alter a word for such a reason." Such work, I say, always touches the deep, pure springs, whereof if a man drink he shall thirst no more, — except to drink at them again. Such labor is always prayer, and the prayer which does not lead us toward such labor fails at last to rise above the roof-tree; and failing here we enter on the course which leads from joy to the judgment.

Because it is clear enough at last where

the rock lay on which this noble and beautiful promise of a young man's life was wrecked. It lay in doing every thing for enjoyment, and nothing for joy, — that curse and bane and plague-spot of a young man's life. Still, this was what led this king among men, from worship to idolatry, from reverence to superstition, and from a clean home, in which he lived with one woman, his own true wife, to a harem; from love to lust, from power to palsy, and from the first heaven to the last hell.

Joy is of the Spartan stock, — nay, let me rather say, of the grandest Christian. There is iron in the blood which pulses through the heart of joy. It is the sentinel's keeping guard in bitter weather, and in a great and holy quarrel. It is Andrew Marvel's eating mutton-hash, and defying the king to buy him up for any dirty purpose. It is Wesley's sleeping on bare boards, and thanking God he had one whole side to sleep on. It is Luther's turning wood for bread, and overturn-

ing kingdoms for righteousness. It is theirs who search for the truth with the whole heart, and then hide it in noble endeavors; it is in the souls of merchants, and clerks, and artisans, and "daytal men," who will not shirk or fawn or lie, and will insist on honest dealings in what they do. It was not this man's way. It is not the way, I fear, in our time, of a great many who would like to pass for Solomons; but its lines run even with the way to the eternal life. Joy lies in chastity, and purity, and charity touched with a tender concern for those we do not like, and in doing for duty what can never be pleasant, but must be done. It is in denying *myself*, when myself would deny my manhood; and in bearing my cross, though I have no hope of a crown.

But that a joy like this can rise and ripen in our age, out of the joy of youth, without faith in God, in the world we live in, and the folk we live with, in the worth of our

work, and in prayer for help from on high, my own sixty-three years of life deny, no matter whether I sit with this sad old king, or say with holy Paul, "I have kept the faith." How large I should make the interpretation of these things, I have no time to tell you. But as I have seen a spring which had cut its way through the very granite, and then poured on to all high uses, gathering and giving as it made its way to the river and the sea; and then another spring that only made a marsh about its margin, in which things would rot but never ripen, — so I can see how men true to this truth I have tried to tell, and working in this faith, carve out a grand sweet manhood which makes us all their debtors; or, failing in this, spread themselves out in dead levels of nothing in particular except procuring the means of enjoyment which rot the very fibre of their manhood as the years pass on, and open the way to a dreary

old age, and the cry, "A man hath no pre-eminence over a beast, for all is vanity."

"Who is my chosen hero? I have none.
This young man is enough for me: brave, chaste,
Faithful to duty, by no vice debased;
Lord of himself, yet serving every one;
Fair, with frank eyes and jocund as the sun,
Smiling from sweet glad lips all amply graced
With natural persuasion; pure from waist
To feet, and shoulder, that no man doth shun—
Nor woman neither — his compulsive charm;
These great, good gifts he ne'er hath used for harm.
From his strong limbs, true heart, fine-fibred brain,
Sweetness flows into life like pure fresh air
From mountains blown over a bed of pain:
I seek naught human loftier, naught more rare."

II

Godlike Temptations

Luke iv. 1-13

I WENT, when I was in England, to visit the ruins of an old castle which was built not long after the Conquest, by a man whose main business it was to keep the land in awe with the strong hand; and it fitted his plan as the hammer fits the hand of a smith, stood true to its purpose for some five hundred years, and then, when the first long chapter of tyrant and slave came to an end in England, was tumbled into ruin by Cromwell and his men.

The stronghold stood on a grand lift of land, which shoots down on one side to a swift-running river; and so it fell out, that *while* the other sides were made strong by

the art and device of the builders, the cliff and the river were considered almost, if not quite, impregnable in themselves. And there is a tradition, that the place was besieged once by a strong force, but was so stoutly defended that the man in command began to think he would be beaten, and the castle remain in the hands which held the bolts and bars.

Still there was one weak side, after all, of which those who held the place had no idea, and it was that they had always considered impregnable. Some mere curtain of a wall had been built there, to be sure, but the splendid lift was in itself the true defence, they said; and so they kept slack watch and ward toward the river, and turned their attention to the side next the town. Then one day a man came to the captain of the enemy's host, and said, "I can climb that cliff, and if you will give me so many picked men I will take the place." And it

was so. One wild, dark night, they climbed the great cliff, found room to muster for the rush, and in the morning the place was in the enemy's hands; and so the high and strong side proved to be the ruin of those who were set to defend the fortress.

So ran the story I used to hear in my boyhood, as we sat by the winter fire far away. And now in my later manhood I find it comes back to me as a kind of parable which points toward this truth: That the imperative need in young men of the finest promise — yes, and in some old men too, who seem to have made their early promise good — is not to set all the sentinels on the meaner and lower side of our nature, and none on the nobler and higher; because this may be our danger as it was theirs who were set to keep the old fortress, that the foe may take us also on this high and strong side.

And we cannot have seen much of life if

we have not found painful proof of this truth. I would like to open to you, at some cost of iteration, that the higher and stronger side of our nature may still be the weaker, simply because there is no need, as we imagine, to explore that thoroughly, and set due watch and ward. We think it is secure from assault, and stands quite impregnable by reason of its own uplifting; while the truth is, as our wise friend says in "A Modern Instance," that "the Devil always takes a man on the very highest plane." I have myself seen many men in my life who were led into temptation first, and then on to wreck and ruin, who could never have come to such grief in a mean and paltry way. It was the old story of the Fall, which still holds such deep meanings for us when we think we have blown it down the wind by a breath of criticism. They would eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and become as gods. Or, some generous impulse was made the point of attack,

or their love for beauty and grace and the joy of youth, or even their sympathy with suffering and sorrow. The hook that caught them was baited with something or the semblance of something very noble and good. Play was made for them with splendid and taking illusions, there was no other way to come at them; but all the same they were led captive by the Devil at his will at last, or had I not better say the evil at *its* will?

I remember many years ago, when I was settled in Chicago, noticing a young man sitting near my pulpit one Sunday, who caught more of my attention than was good for the congregation, with his great dreamy eyes, which were watching me intently, and his face of the most singular beauty and grace. He came again, and often, so we became somewhat intimate in the course of time; and I do not know that I ever met a man of a more delicate and gifted spirit. But I found before very long that he was in the toils of

a terrible curse; and in talking with him, I found the evil thing had come in on this nobler side of his nature. He had taken opium once, in the eager longing to find whether there was indeed any such enchantment in the drug as he had been reading about in De Quincey's wonderful essay, and fearing no evil, but feeling sure that he should be able to hold his own, come out all right at last, and be able to read us some new lesson of the good and evil of the drug. Well, the experience was so full of wonder to him, and sent such magic flying through his fine brain, that he felt he must return to it once more, and still again; and so when I found him he was the slave of that on which he had looked down from his high place as a master, and now he was trying with all his might to drive the enemy out of the fortress, and be free. And there was not a man of us who came to know and love him, who would not have done any thing a man

may do for his rescue; but when he thought, and we all thought, the worst was over, and the fine manhood would bloom out again, it was found that the curse had blasted the very roots of his young life together with the blossom; and so he had to die that he might be free from the body of this death.

Now, I say, it was no base and mean longing which caught this splendid young fellow, when he began to go on the way that leads down to death. The tempter came in through the desire to know more about this wonder he had heard of, and make his report. There stood the tree, — shall I say, of the knowledge of good and evil? — and here was the warning, "Of this tree thou shalt not eat, for in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die;" and here was the tempter to whisper, "You shall not surely die, not *surely;* you shall be as the gods, knowing good from evil;" and then the day came when he had to die, that he might be free from the curse.

So this is one form of these godlike temptations. No need to guard that side of our life, we say; it will take care of itself. We can stand there on our high place, and laugh at the enemy. We must watch our weakness, and we wist not this is our weakness, though it seems to touch the very fringes of heaven.

So it has fallen out often in the history of the nations, that some man has held his own nobly, and grown to be an accepted leader of men; and then some day we find he has fallen suddenly and quite wofully, — "given himself away," as we say, — and made shipwreck of his career; like Webster, as so many say, trying to find his way into the White House. But I do not believe you at all when you credit an essentially noble man with low and mean motives, and these only for doing what we may all deplore. You say, —

> "Just for a handful of silver he left us,
> Just for a medal to stick on his coat."

I say, the chances are, the man was not taken captive in that poor, base way at all; it was a godlike temptation. The whisper to him would be, "Think how much good you may do if you can win that prize; what a blessing you may be to your nation and the world; how you may lead in noble policies, make your country radiant and strong, and die with the tears of the people raining down about your bed." It is no mean ambition in such men merely to get the place, while in some others it may be nothing else. It is on the side where the river of the water of life runs deep and strong, and the great uplifting is, that the enemy gets in. They would have said, "Is thy servant a dog, that he should do this thing?" had the temptation come where they had kept the guard strong all their life.

I think of this again when I read the great, sad story of Robert Burns. The temptations that scourged him while he lived, made death

dark to him, and ruined all that could be ruined of his matchless genius, crept in and caught him on the high and noble side of his nature. To be a cold and calculating villain in his conduct toward women, to die of the drink when he was still in his prime, and leave a widow, with her little children, to the cold charities of the world, and to write things that cripple his beautiful genius down to the cloven foot, — this is no way to frame your verdict of Robert Burns. The sin and shame crept in, again I say, on the nobler side, and he was as far from a base and mean intention as the pit is from the nadir. His love of beauty and grace, yes, and his love of purity, the glamour which comes to such a nature from wine and strong drink, and the fine humors of what so many call good company, the flash and flame of wit, and the stormy splendors of youth at springtide, — these were the lures and wiles which caught his noble spirit and led it captive. Robert

Burns hated hypocrisy and meanness, and the shams and shames he saw all about him, and loved the bright, brave world he saw now and then, and true men and women, and all the pleasantness he could compass in that haggard time and place; and these were the baits that caught him. The way to sin and shame for him, and the woe of it, and the slaying when the enemy had made good his footing, lay through sympathies and likings which were, one may say, the very conditions of being the man he was, apart from the curse.

I had another and a very dear friend in those old times I was looking at just now, a high-minded man, and within his limitations very wise; while he was also one of the most useful men I have ever known, full of public spirit, and one who was always to be depended on to see a good thing through; generous with his money, and generous with his power.

But the tempter whispered, "You are too good for all that plodding you have to do; why not put your fine powers to finer uses, build up your fortune faster, and take a first place?" It seems to me now, there was no danger at all, had he kept watch and ward on the nobler and most generous side of his nature. Try to come at him then with a proposition which would leave a stain on him, it would have been as if you should throw slime at the morning star. But he launched out into large adventures that were full of peril. Some years passed; a panic came, and then the high and beautiful life was taken by a swift stroke; ruin came, death followed, and that was left to be explained for which there is no explanation. His life was like a psalm when I knew him at his best: it passed down to a dirge. He had not kept true guard over the towering ambition, and so the stronger proved to be again the weaker side.

I had in my church in those days also another young man, fresh from a great university. He came to our city, a strong man armed; and there could be no doubt but that he would take a first place in the work he had to do. And where would you find such a rare wit beside, or gleaming humor, or instincts of a finer grain? No danger on the mean side, no place for the Devil there: he knew what it was to be a gentleman, and an American gentleman at that, the finest type of gentlehood I know of on the earth. But he has been dead these many years now, and his death was the back stroke of despair that he should ever be able to master the foe that had come in on the nobler side. There was no other sin or shame, only the drink; but he could not live on those terms, and so, it seemed to him, there was no way open but to die.

Here, then, is the truth as it opens to my mind, of these godlike temptations; and it

brings me to ask the question I have answered in part before the asking, What is to be done about this peril as it touches your life and mine?

This, first of all, I tried to make clear in touching the joy of youth. It is no bane, but a very choice blessing, that we should be endowed with a bright and joyous nature, and love this world and our life when there is nothing mean in it, or low. So if the love for beauty and grace entrances you wherever you turn, you are not to crush this love out or despise it; but to make duty, and a steady watch and ward over such a love, also beautiful and gracious.

Are you full of a fine ambition? you must take this truth home, that the strong side of ambition, if we do not keep a good lookout, may become the weak side of a fair and true manhood. Are your passions and appetites keen and ardent? you must not look down on them with disgust, but hide enough of the

iron of high principle in them, and the fire of a sacred honor, to make their true use and purpose immutable as heaven. Let not that noble vessel of which you are captain now, shape her course until you are as sure as you can be, with this mystery of evil to fight by God's help, that the cargo will not shift in any storm, or you go to sleep when you should be on deck manning her with your choicest manhood. The fortress is in your hands, if I may return to my good old figure, but there is the enemy watching his chance; and I shall believe you will guard the mean side well, but your weakness may lie in the feeling of your strength. You must call on God to help you, and keep strong guard on the nobler side as you do on the meaner. "The sin that doth so easily beset us" may be that we look down on with scorn and contempt, while as yet the untried way lies before us.

III

My New Name

Rev. iii. 12

I FIND food for meditation now and then, as I read my Bible, in tracing the close kinship between the name and the nature of the person to whom it is given, and in noticing how often the name is a patent of nobility or a brand of infamy, given, as one guesses, Indian fashion, when the man or woman had revealed their ingrain quality in their life.

You find when you use this key that Adam is "earthy," but Eve is a "quickening unto life;" and then you remember that this is a parable of names which still holds a meaning, in the mining-camps for instance, where the man is so often of the earth earthy,

until the woman comes to quicken his nobler nature through her own, and make good the sanctities of a home, a church, and a school. Enoch, again, is "dedicated," walking with God; and Noah is "consolation," I suppose because he built that bridge between the despair of the old world and the hope of the new. Abram is "the father of elevation" when he breaks away from the old idolatries, and worships the unseen and eternal God; and then when he reveals that wonderful staying power, reason or none, and believes things are going all right when to his poor mortal sense it must have seemed they were going all wrong, he becomes Abraham "the faithful" and "the father of the faithful."

Artemas, Paul's good friend, is "whole" or sound, again, or what we would call a whole man; and Martha is "tart" or bitter. Samuel is "heard of God," and some say Samson is "sunlike" or "strong." But Deli-

lah, who did so much to wreck his fair youth and manhood, has a very suggestive name indeed: if I have caught the true meaning, she is simply a "head of hair." And there be many Delilahs.

This is a hint, and no more, of what the names mean we pass over in our reading as if they meant no more than those that catch our eye in a directory, and not so much as the Rose, Prudence, Grace, and Joy of my own early days. In the Old Testament they seem always to stand for what is most notable and essential in the man or woman; while in the New Testament you can still trace the coincidence, in many cases, between the person and the quality, and have to believe that a new name was still given to the man when his nature fairly opened out, and he became the incarnation of the special power or quality he flashed into bold relief as he passed between the eternities.

And you can see, again, what worth there was in this instinct for the true name, when you remember that the principle is as true now as it ever was, and may find as fine a fitness in you or me, it may be, to-day, as that which belongs to Job "the weeper," or Luke the "luminous." So the name they gave me when they knew no more what my life would be, than I did, may touch such noble and beautiful meanings that it shall seem like a prophecy as that of John Greenleaf does in our sweet singer; while there is a chance, on the other hand, that my name may be a satire as bitter as if a mother of wolves should call one of her breed a lamb. My real name is that they write in the books which are kept where nothing enters that maketh a lie. It is the name I *earn*, be it a brand of shame, or a title to which that of princes or nobles is a mockery; and I wait for this real, this new name, until I have made my stroke or indeed until I have lived my life as

Shakespeare did, and Cromwell and Milton, and then it is that baptism for the dead against which there is no appeal, and for which there is no legislation. We say of a man sometimes, he has *made* a name. It is the truth about every man; and it would be as easy to change the name of a nation, or shall I not say of God, as this I win when I have fairly lived my life. And it depends in no wise on the whim or fancy of those about us. It is the signature and seal of those above us, and touches a law like that through which iron can never be branded as silk, or round shot for wheat. "Thou, for I know not now thy name in heaven," the poet cries; but it must have been that he wist not of this law. When we had to give our beloved back again to God, who had always lived so close to heaven, passing through all peril like a beam from the sun, and loving and gentle as the angels, I knew what the new name was she

had won in the years she was with us: it was *Grace.*

And in speaking to you of this thought in its wider reaches, I want you to notice first how true this truth of the new name is to the common levels of our life, and the simplest things we can do. You shall go into a hundred homes, for instance, and wherever you go you can read the new name of those who have made the home, or are newly setting out to make it. It will be beauty or deformity, simplicity or pretension, cleanness or squalor, order or tumult, sunshine or gloom. You cannot help your judgment, I cannot help mine. The inmates are revealing their inner life to us. The home was in them before they came to live there, and is the reflection of their nature, as surely as the lovely nest of the Baltimore oriole, or the paltry perversion of the daw. One of my little maids, many years ago, was greatly taken by a book, "How to Live and Make your Home Beau-

tiful on Six Hundred Dollars a Year," but got sadly puzzled over a story the writer told of the way she had sawed up the finial of an old pump she had bought for a few cents, into pretty brackets for her parlor. The wise little creature thought this was the weak place in the book; because, as she said, you could not be sure of finding the top of an old pump going for a few cents at an auction, and then where would you be? But I said, "My child, you will find, when you get a home, that this will not depend on the old pump, but on yourself. If you are bound to have the brackets for your five or ten cents, you will get them somehow, never fear."

Or, it may be, you will break bread somewhere, and the new name will be known to you, or yours to those who come to your home in the breaking of bread. Is it such bread as never should be eaten? and does the young house-mother blame the poor maid in the kitchen? It may happen so once and

again, but as a rule we can trust all the bread is made by the house-mother, though she may not touch it; and if there is death in the pot, the blame must be laid at her door. Is it such bread, again, as the angels are reported to have baken for the prophet, on the strength of which he went forty days? Then the good wife is herself the bread of life. It is not in the wheat, or the leaven, or the oven, you find the true secret of this wholesome worth: it is in the housewife, the fair flower of all civility. They know nothing of such bread among the squaws. The Indian woman on Grand Traverse offered me a cake once when I was out fishing; but I had seen her make it, and said, "No, thank you; I am not hungry just now."

Or, if I build a house to my mind, there is my name on the house for all men to see, and in the pictures on the walls, and the books in the case, in the bits of blended color, and in the very atmosphere men and

women are aware of when they sit down with me in my living-room or my den. A man built a house in Chicago very soon after the fire; and another man, coming to the city, asked a friend where he lived. "I am going that way," was the answer, "and I will show you." — "Please do not do that," the stranger said again; "show me the street, and let me see if I cannot pick out the house myself." So they walked up the street in which, by that time, there might be a score of houses; and the moment he saw one of them he said, "That's the house," and he was right. He saw the builder's mind and heart in the building, and read the new name.

I notice how true this is, again, of our wider life, and how the new name comes out high and clear at last, as if the letters were braided of stars, or were burnt in by infernal fires, and there is no escape. If meanness and self-seeking, and shirking my duty, is the part I play, while I would still win a good

name, the one man in all the world I have to fear is myself. This autograph cannot pass the inner room; the subtile and delicate water-mark is in the substance of my life. But if your new name or mine, on the other hand, is to be one of a proud and sweet distinction, and there are those who would fain make the true man a liar, or the clean man a knave, and set the upright man crawling, by their say-so, then we are not to heed their darts and stings beyond the pain of this present day; the soul of honesty and truth in us stands scatheless and safe from the dart. "I have invented a bullet-proof coat, my lord," the man said to Wellington. "Quite sure of that?" the veteran asked. "Quite sure," was the answer. "Then put it on," was the final word, "and we will see. — Colonel, call in the riflemen, and let them fire at the bullet-proof coat." But then the man begged for grace, and went away. My new name, if I am the man I should be, is

just that armor of proof. No use trying to pierce it with any dart hell ever forged. Nothing can be more sure than the providence which guards the good new name. Evil or envious men would have defiled Washington's: they could as easily have defiled the morning star. Had there been any claws on the seeds of slander that were sown so thick about Lincoln, some would have held their own, and overgrown the fair true record. The whole world inshrines our "faithful father" in its heart. Luther, Milton, Cromwell, — if we had lived when slanders were flying all about them like dead carrion, the best of us might have been tempted to wonder whether there might not be something in them after all, and to say, "There must be some fire in there, else how could there be such a smoke and stench?" But while the lying spirits were forging evil names for them, they were writing their own far up in the heavens, the good new names that can never

die and never change; and now these abide, you see, when the rest are like names writ in water or on the blowing sand.

But others again, like Bacon, mingled meanness with their greatness; and as the ages roll on, the instinct which would fain bury what is base touches them, and, where burial is not possible, tries the white quicklime. It is no use. We might as well try to whitewash the black river in the Mammoth Cave. Such men have engraven their name. This was noble in them, we say, but that was base; the head was gold, but the feet were clay; the judgment has gone beyond us. The record is like the footprints of the human or hardly human creature I saw in Kansas once, on the blue limestone hard now as flint. The thing had stood there for an instant once, and then gone its way, — Darwin's missing link, if one might judge; and there was the proof after untold millenniums, the mark of the mingled man and beast.

I notice, once more, that we may be all the time getting ready to write this new name, or to empower the eternal watchers to write it in some supreme moment; and then there is the seal of our greatness, or the brand of our meanness, so long as our name endures. Jesus said, "Be ye ready, for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh." And some will tell you he means, you shall be ready to die; but I think he means rather that you shall be ready to live, to compact your life, if it must be so, into one grand stroke, and so win at once and forever the good new name. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, the grand ordeal comes in a great steamer on fire far out at sea, or with her side torn open by some foul blow; and then "dastard," "coward," "brute," are branded forever on the men on one side, and "hero," "saint, "son of God," are written on the foreheads of those on the other. Their names go out into

all the earth as the synonymes of baseness or nobility, — the cowards saving a life which was proven by their deed to be not worth saving, deaf to the cries of women and little children;[1] the heroes, steadfast as Milton's angels, tossing all their own chances aside, fronting death with steady eyes, dying, and leaving us to cry proudly through our tears, "He saved others, himself he *would* not save."

Ah! I am glad after all to be a man when I read such a record. It is these heroes, and not the cowards, these noble, and not the base, that hurl the grand defiance in the teeth of death, and say, "You can do nothing to me." These make me proud of my human kind. These are my proofs of the immortal soul and the blessed heaven. Set your machines going to grind out poorer proof, metaphysic, theologic: I do not care for them one pin's head in comparison with the proof such

[1] *Written after* a wreck in which all this came to pass.

men can give me. So the new name may be written at once and forever by one grand stroke. Yet we may spend a whole lifetime getting ready to make that stroke; and no man knoweth the day or the hour when the cry will come, and the demand be made to reveal in that stroke the hidden soul of me, —to write my new name.

So it is all true, once more, you will find in honest old Bunyan, — all true about Obstinate and Pliable, Christian and Hopeful, Mr. Worldly Wiseman who dwells in the town of Carnal Policy, and Faithful who goes through the fire. All true about old Ready-to-Halt, who hobbles toward the eternal life on crutches, but gets there all the same; and Great-Heart, who marches with the step you can still detect in the good soldier in the citizen's garb when you see him on Broadway; Inconsiderate, Old Honest, poor Mr. Fearing who still could fight at a pinch, Dare-not-Lie, Penitent, and all the rest. The fine old

dreamer has only done in the semblance of his dream what we all do waking, — taken out the given name, and put in the new name so that we can all see ourselves in his glass. He knew all these people down Bedford way, and was watching them through the grime when he went a-tinkering through thorpe and town. It was no mere twist of the Puritan mind: this the man hid in his immortal picture is the living truth; and matchless as he is in his way, he gives us only one chapter in the wonderful dictionary of the new names. You will reveal them in the homes you create, as I have said, in the work you do, in the social life you help to maintain, in the churches you uphold, and the schools and libraries, and as citizens of the State and the Republic. The whole wealth or the whole destitution of my life, soon or late, goes into my new name.

And this is my last word, that no young man who hears me need die having missed

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the good new name. Have you been false? You *can* be true. Or heedless, hearing only and not doing? You can give diligence to make your calling and election sure. Have you gone back on the good name they gave you in your baptism? You can find courage in God, as old Cranmer did when he held the hand that had signed away his manhood in the fire, and said, "Burn thou first!" The first faint sketch we make may be sad as the "Miserere" they used to carve sometimes for an epitaph, — just that, and no more. Yet that word may be so re-written that men shall be proud and tender over it to tears.

Or, you may be trying to win the new name, and it may seem to be of no use. The loose livers and loose thinkers may appear to be having the good times, and as good a name, withal, as a man need care for. Nourish no such distrust in the eternal Providence. Men have what they live for, and

the pure in heart see God. Let us be true to ourselves, and to him and his Christ, and then the new name shall be written on thy door-post and lintel, ay, and on thy forehead. Tell the truth at all costs, call things by their right names, stand in the vanguard; lead, if it is laid upon you, the forlorn hope: so shall you be —

"Worthy the envied boon
That waits the good and the sincere;
Those who have struggled, and with resolute will
Vanquished earth's pride and meanness, and have shone
The day-stars of their age."

IV

In the Spirit

Rev. i. 10

I SUPPOSE we all know what it is to be in the spirit on a week-day, — the spirit of the time and place. I go into my study, and become absorbed in a book. The author may be dead and gone this thousand years, and no other trace of him remain on the earth; but if he has hidden his spirit in that book, and I can find it, he opens his heart to me, and I open mine to him, and find myself touched as he was touched when he wrote that chapter. I cannot help the tears in my eyes as I read, any more than he could help them when he wrote, or the strong throb of the heart, or the ripple of laughter. I see what he saw in human homes and human

lives, catch the vision he had of the open heavens, or the lurid flame and smoke. I am in the spirit of this master of my morning, and his spirit is in me; my senses are simply the messengers between his soul and mine. I seem to hear the voice when I read, they used to hear who knew the writer. There is a spell on me which makes time and place of no account, and I wonder how my morning has slipped away.

Or, I leave my study, and go down into the city; and if it is a busy time, it makes no great matter where I go, I find those I seek in the spirit of their week-day, so I have to tell my story promptly, and go about my business. If I should try to "make a few remarks" on a Wednesday, my friend might hear with a touch of grace on a Sunday, he would listen with a patience born of respect to the minister, it may be, or his office; but he would be glad when it was over, so that he could *buckle* down again to his work. Now, this

spirit is as true to the time and place as that was by which I was absorbed in my book. Business, you say, is business, and that is what you are there for. Not to be in the spirit, is to fail in your task; and to have people lounge about and get in your way during the hours when business is done in our stores and offices, is an insult and hinderance to the genius of the day.

Because time then is not only money, as you say, but more. It is that precious commodity of which money is only one result. It is the opportunity for doing the thing God has given us to do there and then; and we are there to do something as sacred and supreme in those hours and in its own degree as worship is, and must not be hindered. I have heard that when Master Howe, the inventor of the sewing-machine, left his business to serve in the war, and was hard at work one day for his regiment, a minister came to see him, and wanted to take his time

in hearing all about a church he wanted to build to St. Peter. "No time at all to hear about St. Peter," the busy man answered, "mind too full of *saltpetre;* but hold on a moment. Was not St. Peter the only fighter among the apostles, the man who drew his sword and cut off some one's ear? I like him, so here's some money for his church. Take it, and please go right away." That was the true spirit of the time, and so it is always. If my friend is the man I am thinking about, doing good and essential work, I see no reason why I should say he is not in the spirit when he guides the springs of industries that move a thousand hands, as surely as the minister is who preaches a sermon or pours out a prayer which touches the springs of thought and emotion in a thousand hearts.

To be in the spirit, then, in the simplest sense, week-day or Sunday, is no mystery we *cannot fathom.* It is as real and true a

thing as to be alive, and is, indeed, neither more nor less than becoming intensely alive to the meaning and purpose of the day. We all remember times when we have gone to our work all out of tune, and unable to fix the mind on what we had to do, half dead, as it were, to the demand; to find, as the time went on, that things were slipping through our hands to no sort of purpose; and when night came we had to say sadly, with the emperor, "I have lost a day." We have lost the day, because we have not caught its spirit. But on another day we have found we were so clear of head and sure of hand that we have done the work of two men, and come out all aglow with the spirit which has borne us as on the wings of eagles. Leave this absorbing and inspiring spirit out of the account, then, and you are powerless to do any thing supremely well. You drift with the tide, you fall behind in the race. You are like the clock which always loses

time, and would have to give up if you had no hope that the old fervor would come back again, and make the spirit equal to the day.

Nor can we help seeing, again, that the best work we ever do has this quality in it above all others. It is done in the spirit, of fails of its finest secret. From nursing a little child to fighting a battle, from forging a bolt to painting a picture, from working in a saw-mill to singing in "The Messiah," we must have this essence and spirit of all well doing, or else we never do well. If I am an employer, I bear with my workman as long as I can, if he is no good, as we say, because I think he may come round, and catch the spirit of his task. But if I find, after all my waiting, the hand is there, but not the spirit, I have to let him go, because to have such a man in my place is like having a bad wheel in a machine; and so able employers propose to keep those men at last, and those alone, who are in some fair measure one with

them in the spirit of their work. And no doubt this is true, again: that when you have made a fair allowance for the native ability of the young men who begin at the foot of the ladder, and climb to the top, you will find they are the men who have an absorbing interest in the concern, and are watchful and careful, and able to say honestly, "I and my employer are one." This, as a rule we can trust, is the story of the young man who begins with no advantage in position or patronage, and makes his way to the highest place. He is in the spirit of his work, and gives his heart to it, not half the time but all the time, not grudgingly but gladly, and not merely for the sake of the salary any more than your good doctor helps us in our hurts for the sake of the fee, but because he loves to do that better than any thing else in the world, and makes his work greatly its own reward.

And such success is not to be wondered

at, again, when we think for a moment what it is such a young man has done. His shopmates or fellow-clerks will say he has a genius for what he takes in hand, and this may be true; but then, does not a genius for any thing depend greatly on our absorbing love for it, and the power of intense application, through which every other power is set to its finest edge, and directed to the one purpose the man has in his heart and brain? I imagine that what we call genius is very often something like our power of lifting, — a common endowment at the start, but capable of such a growth, by diligent striving, in a healthy man, that it shall become a wonder. So genius of any sort lies less in the original endowment, and more in the power to work steadily in the spirit of what we have to do and *want* to do, than we are ready to admit, who go to work with half a heart. Native endowment is like iron in the ore; genius is the iron forged to fine shapes

and polished and tempered for all noble uses. Genius latent or asleep is like the gold-dust and scales of gold they wash in the mountains; but it passes through this spirit, is fused and refined, and then is wrought into forms which add an almost priceless value to the mere weight of worth, such as you find in a vase by Cellini. Genius is the gift of God, and then it is our intense and absorbing purpose to make the very best of the gift, the perpetual fidelity to Paul's great word, "This one thing I do," and to the greater word of Jesus, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work."

And if you want more proof of the truth, I would tell you, it can easily be found in the life of those who win the highest honors, and in noticing how they win them. Your great actor, for instance, is always the man who enters most thoroughly into the spirit of his play, penetrates it with the fire and tears of his own nature, and so sways his audience

this way and that, as the trees on the uplands are swayed by the wind. When you follow an actor, therefore, and say how well he plays, I think he does not play well, or you would not say so. I saw Ristori once in "Macbeth," with the veil down no art can lift for those who are not born into our English tongue; but when she came, moaning of her doom, in her sleep, and wringing her hands, it was not acting to me, it was the hapless woman herself, — the terrible thing James thought of when he said, "Sin, when it is finishèd, bringeth forth death." Ristori was in the spirit.

One man comes to our city we are always glad to see and hear. His play is as poor a thing as can well be imagined, and goes in the teeth of the nobler instincts in us all, in the favor it shows to a very worthless ne'er-do-weel, by comparison with his poor, striving wife, so that I always begin by taking the woman's part, and say she serves him right

when she drives him to the hills. And there are other faults in the play, very grave faults indeed, especially in the glamour it casts over the curse of strong drink in the hands of a weak man. But we forget all this in the wonderful witchery of the artist, and weep and laugh at his bidding. The touch of nature makes us all of kin, and wins our forgiveness, or, shall I say, steals away the heart, so that we have nothing to forgive. How is this done? I will tell you how I think it is done. The man has made this drama the subject of his intensest thought and care, he has felt his way past the letter into the spirit, and is so absorbed, so lost in it, that from the moment he appears, with the children hanging about him, he does not assume a character, he is just Rip himself. And I have been told, that, while he is subject to an affliction he cannot master when he is himself, as we say, when he is in the spirit of his own wonderful creation it never troubles him at all.

And so it was, again, with Miss Cushman. She clung to her work in the last years of her life, a dear friend told me, who knew her very well, because it was her one refuge from perpetual pain. When she was once in the spirit of her noble creations, she was free from her great, sad burden. So it is also with the advocate who makes his client's cause his own, and feels the case is worthy of the best he can do. He sways the jury then, and wins the day against the man who cannot for the life of him enter into the spirit of the case. An old friend of mine,[1] who used to ride circuit with Mr. Lincoln in the West at an early day, told me how he always knew when Lincoln was bound to win his cause. He had first to feel sure he was right, and then the sense of justice and truth grew so strong in him, and so absorbed all his powers, that his words were like a hammer and a fire.

[1] Hon. Ebenezer Peck.

So no man can ever preach to any purpose who is not taken up in the spirit of the truth he has to tell. Take that element out of his work, and the sermon may be as fine as hands can make it, yet the very deacons will go to sleep under that sermon. But let him be in the spirit, and then, though the discourse may seem to be as dry as Aaron's rod before it budded, there will come a time when this that moves him shall carry all before it, like the rushing of a mighty wind. There is a story of a sermon Jonathan Edwards preached once in New England, from the text, "Your feet shall slide in due time;" and the people settled down comfortably to listen or sleep as the spirit moved them. And why not to sleep? For the preacher hardly raises his voice above the merest monotone, and the sermon is written and read. But the man swayed them so, and stormed them, as he went on in his discourse, and painted picture after picture of the impending doom, so fear-

ful, that we are told many in the congregation clung to the pillars of the meeting-house in solid affright, so terrible was the chasm that seemed to open before their very eyes. The earth was shuddering under them, and the level floor sloping down toward the eternal fires. The word had grown to this through years of brooding. A misconception, you say, a monstrous birth. Yes, so I believe; but, all the same, fearfully true to the preacher, and, by consequence, fearfully true to his hearers. Jonathan Edwards was in the spirit. And so you may set this truth in whatever light you will, of business or study, of work on the common levels of our life, or the fairest summits, — you touch the one verity everywhere, that to be wholly in the spirit of what you do is the final secret of all pure worth in the doing.

So when we pass from such instances to ask what this man means by saying he was in the spirit on the Lord's Day, and what

worth there may be in it for your young life and my old one, here is the first truth as it touches the man. The tradition is that he was banished to Patmos, to work in the mines there, because he was of the outcast and branded Christian sect; and if this is the truth, we cannot doubt that his overseers would keep a stern hand on him, and allow no Lord's Day in leisure to rest, or time to worship. He would have to dig and delve his full stint, like the slave he was, until the time came to lay down his pick and go to his hovel. Or, if it was known among his keepers that this day was more sacred to him than any other in the week, they would mark it for him, it may be, with the rubric of a deeper misery. But the great and dear Friend whose word was the master-key to John's life, had said once that not here or there, on this high place or that, should men seek for some special way to the heart of God, but wherever we worship in spirit and

in truth, on a mountain or in a mine, as he would read the words now. So the desolate island compassed by the sea could no more keep God out than it could keep the sun out, and the low dark cave in which he had to delve would be as true a temple as if he had stood between the pillars Beauty and Strength. His hands would toil at the heavy task, but the spell of the spirit was on him to lift him out of his misery into these visions wherein at last the paradise of God is regained. The vision would grow out of this power which possessed him, and this faith that he was very near to God, and to his great, dear Friend, with thousands more scattered over the vast, brutal empire. He was in the spirit, and then the dismal place lay close to the gates of heaven. The sacred places of his life were far away over the sea. The Lord's Day music was the wailing of the wind and the moan of the mighty waters. There was no human heart there answering

to his own, no winsome human faces to be in themselves a gospel, no lesson or prayer from another heart, or sermon to help him along. He was in the spirit, just that, and no more; but by that one blessed spell the whole wealth of sacred places, of symbols, music, prayers, lessons, and sermons, would grow poor and thin, as the light of so many candles is thin and poor what time the sun rises and fills the world with light.

Now, did you ever see that fine picture, "The Tuning of the Bell," and notice how the workman stands with his hammer, waiting on one with a musical instrument, who is looking upward as he touches the strings, as if he would bring the melody out of the very heavens? The great heavy mass, and the man who has moulded it, have to wait on the eager searching spirit of the tone-master, or the work when it is done will be "jangled, out of tune, and harsh." It is this Lord's Day spirit to the work and the

workman, and the hiding of fine harmonies within material things. It was the instance to me of the thought which has dwelt with me many years now, and grown clearer with the years.

We are in the spirit on the Lord's Day, and then we can hide its fine harmonies in the week-day work. I will give place to no man in my faith that every day is the Lord's day; that work well done is also worship; that the ring of the hammer is as sacred as the striking of the harp; the hum of honest industry, as the psalms of the sanctuary; and the long strain of the week-day burden, as the sabbath rest and prayer. Every word of this is true; but, then, for that reason I must be in the spirit on the Lord's Day as I am also in the week-day; and, if I deem work as sacred as worship, the canon holds good again, that I must deem worship as sacred as work. Life to the most of us on our week-days is a hard battle with heavy labor, and

too scant a rest. We look for our Sunday as in stony Arabia the traveller looks forward to palm-trees and a well. We are hungry in the heart and athirst and tired, and it may be disheartened. I am in the spirit on the Lord's Day, and in the spirit of the Lord's Day, it is a battle-flag and a trumpet, bread that never moulders, wells that never run dry, a great sweet shadow in a weary land. I go to my church, and bear up my minister, then, on the wings of an eager longing to welcome his thought, instead of beating his wings down with the rain of my indifference. I pour out the oil of my welcome over the dry sticks, perchance, of what he may truly call his "effort;" and it is as when the fire came down, and licked up at once offering and altar, and wrested Israel in a day from Baal back to God. I turn to my books when I come home; they reveal deeper meanings in the quiet restful hours, and a sweeter grace. I seek the woods and

meadows; they are haunted for me by the spirit of my day. The great tone-master has attuned all things afresh. A voice has said again, "Behold, I make all things new."

V

Two Emigrants

Gen. xi. 31, 32

IF you take a map of the region in which the man lived, whose story I want to touch for you as it touches my own heart, I think you will be able to form some idea of what he did in contrast with what he set out to do. Haran is about a day's march from the old homestead he left, while Canaan is ten or twelve; and it is easy going to Haran, one would think, but very hard to Canaan, because after you leave the place at which he halted, and push on toward that he aimed at, you have to cross a river over which there is or was no bridge, a desert of seven days' journey, and the rugged passes of the mountains. So that to reach

Haran from Ur would be a sort of picnic; but to reach Canaan after that would be a painful pilgrimage, which would demand about all the pluck and courage there was in you.

Then, if we could see this Edessa, as it came to be called at a later day, we might guess how Terah caught the idea of going to Canaan. Edessa is a pretty little place, travellers say, as you shall find anywhere in old Chaldæa. It stands in a sort of desert, beside a deep, clear spring, in the midst of shade-trees and fruit-trees; and, above this, there rises a great rock on which there has stood a fortress, time out of mind, to which they could retreat when the enemy came, and defend themselves when there was no hope that they could do this on the plain. This was about the sum and substance then of Edessa, — a small place standing by itself in a desert, very pleasant and good to live in if you are content to live in a small way, and

nourish no ambition for a wider and larger life.

Now, Terah, if we may trust the old traditions, was a brass-founder in this pent-up place, and his special line of business was the making of molten gods. But such an industry as that must have been rather limited, for good reasons. Only so many would be wanted, at the most; and they would not wear out as wagons do, and ploughs, but the older they grew, the better the people would like them. Nor would there be any great improvement possible, except by permission of the priests, who are usually the last men in the world to admit that such things can be improved; so the poor man could not strike a new idea in this matter of the molten gods, and push the old incumbents from their stools, or melt them over and bring them out in a finer fashion, allowing buyers so much for the old metal.

We may guess, therefore, in what a strait

Terah found himself at last, and why he may have begun to look with longing eyes westward. This Canaan away over the river, the desert, and the mountains, seems to have been a sort of Pacific Slope in those times; a splendid land of promise, in which you could live to your heart's content, when once you got there; widen the whole horizon of your life; find untold outlets for your powers; plant the stocks anew which had no room to grow in the pent-up garden-plat of Edessa; and then die when your time came, happy in the thought that you had made your stroke, and opened the way toward a larger and fairer life.

So Terah, as I have come to think of him, it may be because I am an emigrant myself, — began to look with longing eyes toward the land of Canaan. He was ready, as he thought, to give up comfort for freedom; and a home and workshop in a pent-up place, in which he was bound to follow time-honored traditions and usages, for a tent, if it must

be so, on the breezy slopes away beyond the mountains, with the ocean for his boundary on the one side and the desert on the other; and to exchange the safe citadel on the rock for the nobler fastness of a manhood that would hold its own against the world, and win.

It was a tremendous thing, as things stood then, to do. I think I can see him through the mists of time, sitting there in his work-shop with his gods about him, trying to count the cost; and all the time, as he thinks of it, the plan grows more and more feasible. Then he consults the young men about it, his son and nephew; and of all things in the world, of course, this is what they would like to do, especially his son, who has already begun to dream of a wider and higher life for himself. So there would be a notice, we may presume, sent through the town, of a house and shop for sale, and the molten gods withal, at the buyer's own price, because

Terah must be rid of them, he is going far away. Then the roots of his life would be torn out of the soil in which they had flourished, from father to son, ever since the times of the Tower of Babel. And there would be weeping among them, I think, and visits made to the graves of those they had loved, and the homes of their kinsfolk all about; and then, on a morning, you would see them set out on their day's march to Haran, where they would halt, and start on the morrow toward the river and the promised land. That morrow never came to Terah. How it was, we do not know: we only know this, that forward to Canaan he does not take another step. Haran itself is a pleasant place, I hear, with plenty of good land about it; and there would be a better chance for life and a living, it may be, there, than any he had left behind him in Edessa. Be this as it may, reason or none, there he staid a great while, and there he died. One day's march from the

place he had left, ten or twelve from that he dreamed of, far away yet from the promised land. And so never now will he see the white glories of Lebanon, never the summer splendors of Hermon and Sharon, and never the blue sea turning to gold as he watches it at sunset from the crests of Carmel. He started on a journey: it ended, one might almost say, in a jaunt. He dreamed of the mountains, and settled on a flat. His ideal was freedom, to be bought with a great price; he struck this one stroke for it, and accepted comfort again on good securities. He went back no more; but then, he went forward no farther, — got his chance just this once at a singular, separate, generous, free life, which held in its heart unknown treasures of greatness and worth, if he had only gone forth that morning, and made them his own. The morning came, and Terah was not ready. He was not to be one of the units in our life, after all, but only one of the vulgar fractions;

not one of the men who stand out in clear and bold relief against the darkness of the ages, but one of the masses of men, — Terah, the father of Abraham, who set out for the promised land, and then halted at the end of the one day's march.

But now as I watch him sitting there, I am moved to make some plea for a kindlier judgment than this I have rendered touching his failure. It is clear, for one thing, that he is far on in years when he feels this impulse to strike out toward a wider and finer life; and so his years would tell against him. Old men soon tire of new adventures. They are "*afraid* of that which is high." Then this was not only change which was waiting in his outward life, but a wrench to his inward life also. This son of his, who grows to be one of the supreme men, you know, of the world, has set his face already against the old gods, and is no doubt looking forward to the new home as a place

where he will not only be free to go where he will and do what he will earthward, but heavenward too; and I think Terah guesses this is just what will befall them. So we may imagine where the main trouble lies. Here is a man setting out on a great new enterprise, at a time of life when Nature opposes instead of helping him; looking forward with his eyes, while his heart is looking backward; a man with Canaan on his lips and Edessa in his marrow; giving up the old paths which are as familiar to him as his own dooryard, to wander away over hills and dales all new to him, and all strange. I do not wonder the old man's heart failed him. He needed more than an impulse to lift him out of his old life. Only an inspiration could do that, and I am not sure even this could have mastered him when so much of life lay behind him. And so he must have said sadly enough, "It is no use. I will not go back, but I cannot go forward. I will settle

down here, and wait for the angel of death. I can still do a very good day's work in Haran. They have no such gods here as I used to turn out in the old place. Their ideals are low. I will go to work and improve them." Something like this he must have said to the young men, while they talked with him of the better land, its freedom and beauty, and its rich reward. They spoke of freedom, he preferred safety; of the mountains, he was wedded to the flat; of the sea, he liked the little river better purling along in the sunshine; of great rides across the greensward, he liked his arm-chair better on the porch in summer, and in winter by the fire. "So Terah took Abram his son and Lot his brother's son, and Sarah his daughter-in-law, and went forth with them from Ur of the Chaldees to go to Canaan; and they came to Haran and dwelt there, and Terah *died* in Haran."

But we have to notice, again, that this is

by no means the end of the one day's march, for now we see what we have come to call "evolution" at work. Terah brings the young men so far toward this larger and better life he would fain have found, and then the impulse in him to go forward is mastered by the longing to sit still. But the time comes when that which was only an impulse in the father changes in the son to an inspiration through which he not only carries out the whole intention of Terah, but does more than he ever dreamed of doing, because that which was only a desire in the first man to better himself becomes in the second a blessing to the race, and the whisper of ambition in the one man changes in the other to the voice of God.

I need not dwell long on this point in the story. I need only say that there is no evidence, or hint even, of a Divine light and leading in what these men are doing, until Terah is dead. But then God speaks to his

son, bids him get out of Haran, and pass over to the promised land; and once there he becomes the spring-head of the floods of blessing to which the prophets belong and the psalmists, the seed of a mighty and matchless harvest the world is reaping still for the everlasting life. So, while the old man never saw the promised land, the young man saw it, and pre-empted it, as we say, for the home of the race which lay in his loins when he did cross the river and the mountains, and saw the land he had been dreaming of so long, while the old father's arm was about his neck, holding him back from his great desire. And so it seems but the simple truth to say that some touch of this glory rests on the old man's grave, — after all, because we have no sure reason to think that the son would have gone to Canaan if the father had not set out to go, even if he did break down at the end of *the first* day's march. The impulse came

first, the inspiration followed; but who shall be sure we could have had the one without the other? There are those, I suppose, in Edessa to-day, who have come straight down from some man who was quite content to stay there when Terah tore out the roots of his life; called him an old fool, perhaps, for not letting well enough alone; bought his molten gods, it may be, — a dead bargain, — made money on them; and never once in all his life looked beyond the palm-trees and the spring: but in all the world you would hardly find a poorer story of what men may do for the world's help and blessing than such a line of men would have to tell you. It is the first step which costs; and taking this first step, I love to believe, did something very noble for the genius and inspiration which has made our Bible the supreme book of the world, and this Hebrew line the greatest touching the religious life the world has ever known. Terah's dream never came true;

but then, he had the dream, and did something to make it come true to his son, and so to the race. They say the way to hell is paved with good intentions. Well, here is one of the good intentions, then, that pave the way to heaven. He did see the promised land, after all, through the eyes of the man he had gotten from the Lord; and there was a strain of the sturdy striving which had paid the price of leaving the old place, in him who would never stop until he came to the new. So his feet also are beautiful upon the mountains, though he never saw them. I said he started on a journey, and it ended in a jaunt; but this must not blind us to what that jaunt must have cost him, — the great sorrow of parting, — the heart-ache of the man who seems to have stopped for the bone-ache. He did not do all he set out to do, let us allow this; but he did more than any other man of his clan in Edessa; *and dying* in Haran, he was not only one

day's march on the road to this larger and finer life, but he had made it so much easier for the young men to go right on to the end.

And so this man's life touches yours and mine, and opens out toward some truths we may well lay to our hearts, and this is the first: That, if I want to do a great and good thing in this world, of any sort, while the best of my life lies still before me, the sooner I set about it the better. For, while there is always a separate and special worth in a good old age, this power is very seldom in it, I would try to verify; and it is not your old Philip, but your young Alexander, who conquers the world. I can remember no grand invention, no peerless reform in life or religion, no noble enterprise, no superb stroke of any sort, that was not started from a spark in our youth and early manhood. Once well past that line, and you can dream of Canaan; but the chances are, you will stop at Haran,

so this putting off any great and good adventure from your earlier to your later age is like waiting for low water before you launch your ship. If we want to make our dream of a nobler and wider life of any sort come true, we must push on while the fresh strong powers are in us, which are more than half the battle. The whole wealth of real enterprise belongs to our youth and earlier manhood. It is then that we get our chance of rising from a collective mediocrity into some sort of distinct nobility. We may be ever so sincere after this, as far as we can go; but we shall only go to Haran. Yes, and we may have a splendid vision, as when this man saw Hermon and Sharon and the sea in his mind's eye, as he sat in his chair; and a noble and good intention, as when he started for the mountains, and halted on the plain: but just this is what will befall us also, if we are not true to this holy law of our life.

This is my first thought; and my second

must take the form of a plea with those who do strike out to do grand and good things in this world, and do not halt, but march right on, and then nourish a certain contempt for those who still lag behind. The chances are, it is because these begin too late, that they end too soon; and it is no small matter that they begin at all. For myself, I can only blame them, when, with the visions of a nobler life haunting the heart, they tell me that Haran is good enough for anybody, and we need none of us look for any thing better. If they know all the while, as this man knew, that the land of promise still lies beyond the line at which they have halted, and will say so frankly, though they may go only the one day's march, I can still bare my head in reverence before such men. I know what it is to leave these Edessas of our life, and what it costs; how the old homes and altars still have the pull on you, and the shadows of the palm-trees, and the well at

which you have drunk so long, and what loving arms twine about you to hold you back from even the one day's march. So, when I hear those blamed who stop short still of where I think they ought to be, I want to say, Have you any idea of what it has cost them to go so far as that, and whether it was possible for them to go any farther? And then, is it not a good thing anyhow to take those who belong to them the one day's march, and, setting their faces toward the great fair land of promise, leave God to see to it, that this which may be no more than an impulse in the man who has to halt, may grow again to a great inspiration in the son of his spirit and life who goes right on?

And this, I think, is what we may count on in every honest endeavor after a wider and better life. So I like the suggestion that the way the eagle got his wings, and went soaring up toward the sun, grew out of the impulse to soar. That the wings did not

precede the desire to fly, but the desire to fly preceded the wings. Something within the creature whispered, "Get up there into the blue heavens; don't be content to crawl down in the marsh. Out with you!" And so somehow, through what would seem to us to be an eternity of trying, — so long it was between the first of the kind that felt the impulse, and the one that really did the thing, done, — it was at last, in despite of the very law of gravitation, as well as by it; and there he was, as I have seen him, soaring over the blue summits, screaming out his delight, and spreading his pinions twelve feet, they said, from tip to tip.

I like the suggestion, because it is so true to the life we also have to live, — trying and failing; setting out for Canaan, and stopping at Haran; intending great things, and doing little things, many of us, after all. I tell you again, the good intention goes to pave the way to heaven, if it be an honest and true

intention. There is a pin-feather of the eagle's wing started somewhere in our starting, — a soaring which goes far beyond our stopping. We may only get to the edge of the slough, but those who come after us will soar far up toward the sun.

So let me end with a word of cheer. The Moslem says, "God loved Abdallah so well that He would not let him attain to that he most deeply desired." And Coleridge says, "I am like the ostrich: I cannot fly, yet I have wings that give me the feeling of flight. I am only a bird of the earth, but still a bird." And Robertson of Brighton says, "Man's true destiny is to be not dissatisfied, but forever *un*satisfied."

And you may set out even in your youth, therefore, with this high purpose in you I have tried to touch. You will make your way to a good place, a wider and more gracious life, do a great day's work, rise above all mediocrity into a distinct nobility,

find some day, that, though you have done your best, you have fallen far below your dream, and the Canaan of your heart's desire lies still in the far distance. You have not labored in vain: no man ever can who puts this noble heart into it all. You have got the *feeling* of flight. The terms of rising are in all you have done as a man among men, evangelist, reformer, day-worker, I do not care. All grand and great things lie in the heart of our striving. Then

"Sudden rest may fall on wearied sinews;
We may droop and die: the work continues.
God names differently what we call failing,
In a glorious mist his purpose veiling."

VI

Two Children

Gen. xvii. 18

THE boy in whose behalf this most touching and pathetic prayer is said was as yet the only son of his father, and stood in the direct succession to his estates; while the father seems to have concluded also that he was to inherit the promises through which his race would possess the land to which he had emigrated from the old home beyond the Euphrates. It was, indeed, very much as one of our Puritan ancestors in Plymouth or Salem would think of an only son, who would not only inherit all the wealth he had got hold of in land and cattle, but would also carry out the promises which had brought him over the sea. The promise of a new church and com-

monwealth, so intimately one that the secular should be sacred and the sacred secular, and the whole commonwealth part and parcel of the kingdom of God on the earth, — this seems to have been the dream the father had been cherishing, as he watched the boy grow toward the promise of a man after his own heart. He had laid out a plan for his future, and settled every thing so far in his favor; and then one day it is whispered to him that he is to be the father of another son, who will push this one down, and take the first place; and it is this that compels him to cry to the Most High, "Oh that Ishmael might live before thee!" He cannot have it so. He has set his heart on this ruddy young creature, who is running over the wild uplands so full of life. He wants his own way, right or wrong. He would settle this question of who should be greatest, as it ought to be settled, through his love for the boy who had brought so much brightness into his old age. But it is no use: his prayer

cannot be heard and answered in this way. There is a blessing in store for the boy, but not this the old man would have. He will be the ancestor of the tribes of the desert, and the father of princes; but the fairer promise, over which the heavens are bending, rests forever with the unborn child. So there is no more to be said. The passage closes with a word which ends the matter once for all: "He left off talking with Abraham, and went up from him."

Nor can I be mistaken, I think, in saying that when you read between the lines of this far-away chapter in the story of a very noble house, you are pretty sure to find yourself on Abraham's side, — for Ishmael. Because he *was* the first-born, for one thing, and had his rights on this ground to whatever worth lay within his birthright, in a land and time when this law of primogeniture was of the very first moment. Then, again, he was the darling of his father's heart, who had worked

for him and saved for him, and thought of him always as his heir down to this day. Nor had the boy done any thing as yet to disturb this right of succession; while, in a time with which he had nothing to do, his poor mother had gone through troubles which must have cast a shadow over his whole childhood; and still, again, it must have been hard for him to have such a childhood as his fine, free nature demanded, if he lived much under Sarah's eye, who could carry things with a high hand when she was in one of her black tempers, and make the father of the faithful himself behave very much like a poltroon.

We have to notice, also, as the younger son grows up, how thin a shadow he casts against the curtain of these old days. He seems like a ghost, compared with his great old father. He is a mother's boy, in the rather poor sense of keeping close under her wing, and never rushing out on a separate adventure of his own that would make the

blood in him tingle to the tips of his fingers. And no good and quiet boy in the Society of Friends, on a fine old farm in Pennsylvania, following close in the footsteps of Friends' Meeting through the long traditions of First Day and Fourth Day, could ever be more entirely to a mother's mind, I suppose, than Isaac was to Sarah's; while, on the other hand, such glimpses as we get of Ishmael in the Bible, and the traditions which have lingered like long echoes among the tribes who claim him for their father, reveal a presence which reams and pulses with life, and is all on fire with the qualities we love to see in a growing youth, because they hold in them the promise, as we think, of a bright and strong manhood. Why should not a lad like Ishmael get his rights, then, we say, against a lad like Isaac, when we see how each life opens in the course of time? and what is this man driving at who indites the chronicle which makes Heaven interfere to

give him the lower and poorer place? Here, surely, to a rational mind, which will not believe that to be true which smites at the roots of equity, is one of the things we have to reject in the interest of the revelation of which it claims to be a part; or, if we accept the story as it stands as true, we must look within the lines, as well as between them, for our belief that the man is right when he sets the question in this light.

It is because I believe he *was* right, that I have taken up the question, and then because I think the truth he tells us runs through the very marrow of this life of ours now, and touches us in the same close and painful way as it touched this old man and his boy, on the one hand; while, on the other, it brings a truth home we all have to ponder, of as deep a moment as any we can touch in the interests of the soul, shall I say, as these stand in conflict with the senses.

For, true as it is that the boy was not to

blame, yet blame comes with him and clings to him, poor fellow, though he can help it no more as yet than an Ethiopian can help his color. And it is true here, as it always is and must be, that you have to go beyond Ishmael before you can get at the rights of his troubled life. He was Abraham's son, but he was not Sarah's son; yet Sarah, with all her faults, was the man's true wife. And here lies the main root of the trouble. For you will often notice how these men who stand out in such bold relief in our Bible, tamper with this most sacred order of our human life, — that a man shall be the husband of one wife, — and for reasons which seem good then and there, take other wives, or do worse, and have children by them, just as they do up here among the mountains, to the disgrace and shame of our nation. And you may easily imagine they have got Heaven on their side, if you are to accept all that is said about the transaction, just as our Mormons do, who can give you chapter and

verse for their sin and shame; and if you allow their canons of inspiration to be true, as my good Methodist brother did who went out to "labor with them," they will leave you not a foot to stand on.

But when you leave the Word to follow the deed, and then trace the deed by the law of a clean and true life, the law of one wife and one husband, it is not hard to see where the truth of God abides. I do not remember one instance in the Bible of this invasion of the purity and cleanness of our life, which does not turn out in the end to be a great and sad mistake, bringing trouble and dismay to the man who makes it, and revealing itself in some sad way, soon or late, in the children. It may be a case like this, or like that of Jacob who should have married Rachel for his one wife, or like those of David or Solomon, or any of the rest: it comes back on them all at last in trouble and shame. Their *sin* finds them out. And so this poor boy has

to bear the brunt of his father's evil deed; the disturbance of the old true order is in his life when he is born. God is with him to the great heart of the seer who tells the story, to make the best of him, and bring what good can be brought out of the evil; but there lies the evil hidden in his heart all the same. He will be a *wild* man. His hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him. The wild, passionate resentment of the mother driven out into the wilderness lurks in the son; and it will drive him out, and sow itself afresh through thousands of years, as I read the story, in the untamable tribes which are to wander over the desert and live from hand to mouth; while the children of the younger son, the happy child of promise, over whose birthright the very angels are standing guard, will live out this Bible, and then write it out, and the nations will find in it the word of God to man.

You see the drift of the truth I want to

tell, then, and how it comes home to those who may be tempted to swerve from the one true law, and to start influences that may run through the ages to come in human lives; or, standing true to this law, take those from God over whose advent the angels will bend with a loving concern and care. Jesus said, "There is nothing secret that shall not be revealed, and what is done in the closet will be proclaimed on the house-top." And so I tell you young men especially, for whose souls I watch as I watch for my own, you can invade these most holy laws of our life, and imagine you have covered your tracks, and yet by that one sin you shall hurl a calamity through a hundred years, and strike your great-great-grandson who may be sitting where you are now in 1987. Yes, and you may still send the calamity on through the ages to strike and miss, miss and strike, like a jumping shot, through a thousand and a thousand years, as

this man did who cried, "Oh that Ishmael might live before thee!" So I think there is something really noble in the man who says, "If I sin, I know I shall suffer, and I do not mean to creep out of it even under a robe of imputed righteousness. I will take the bitter the best I may, for I have had what I deemed to be the sweet." But this personal penalty I can bear myself is one of the simplest elements, after all, in the solution of this awful problem of the sowing and the reaping. The real nerve of the question may lie farther on. I had a friend once who lived as true to the laws of our life as any man I have ever known, but his great-grandsire, who was a general in the Revolution, and what you call "a high liver," sent down to him the sure result of such living; and so my poor friend used to say he did not think it was fair that he should have the gout to torment him, a perfect abstainer as he was, while the old general had the wine. So you strain your eyes,

and your son has to wear spectacles. You drink the dram, and seem no worse; but your son has to stagger for it. Or, take to these wild ways, and say you are ready to bear the penalty; but you may be able to do no such thing. You may be "saved," as you say, by God's grace, like a brand plucked from the burning; yet there may be a man in the world you love better than your life, who shall be like this Ishmael, a wild man, and the sire of wild men, to the end of the chapter.

There is another truth in this story of a family, we may well consider also, and it is this: If Hagar had been the one wife of this man, she was not the woman to bear this child of the promises. Hagar the Egyptian, we hear her called, — a slave given to the man when he was over there, as some imagine, but in any case a woman with a poorer nature and a lower faith. Now, I care not how good it may seem to a man to take a wife of a lower and

meaner nature than his own, though a voice out of heaven may seem to say, "This is the woman for thee;" the children will follow the mother, and the whole world cannot alter the law any more than it can alter the tides. And so, on the other hand, when men of the world say, "I leave the religion of the family to my wife, and attend to business," and know as they say so that the wife has indeed the deeper and truer heart toward the immutable things of God, they may be aware of a touch of humor on the edge of their remark, and perhaps take refuge from the church themselves in the Sunday-morning paper; but they have touched in the saying one of the deepest and most momentous truths they are ever likely to reveal about their home: that the mother has the deeper heart, and will raise children of a finer type than her husband. The children follow the mother in this inner life. It is a wonderful touch in the Gospels, which makes Mary stand in the light of

heaven, and leaves Joseph in the shadow, when they would account for the man Christ Jesus; wonderful, and yet natural as life itself. Mary holds all these conditions of the diviner life in her nature; he is the holy child because he has this holy mother, and we could have the world's divinest manhood in no other way.

So Ishmael was a wild man, and he became an archer, and dwelt in the desert. His hand was against every man, and every man's hand was against him. The tradition of the desert runs, that, when Hagar got him all to herself, she led him back to her own gods; but Isaac stays in the tents, and learns the lessons of faith in the one God, eternal and invisible, his father had made so far good. Ishmael was in some respects by far the finer creature, as I think of him, — ruddy, restless, full of life, and clever with his hands and feet and eyes; but he was a wild man, as empty of the higher vision as the goats he chased

over the rocks. There is a vast difference, Seneca says, between refusing to do wrong, and not knowing how. Ishmael, poor fellow, had neither the ignorance nor the self-government; and so he became the sire of such a line as we should have in our wild new West, if the gentler and deeper-hearted Isaacs did not go there to start and maintain the finer and nobler life.

For Isaac stands to us for the type of the inward life, and Ishmael of the outward. This, of the supremacy of the soul over the senses; and that, the supremacy of the senses over the soul. This man for whom the father prays is a bit of pure nature; but that for whom Sarah watches is touched by the grace which purifies, exalts, and transforms. The one child may storm about the earth, but the other will stay near the gates of heaven. Ishmael will find a woman in Egypt, and marry down to his grade; but Isaac will marry the maiden who was born unto Bethuel

the son of Milcah. And he will have his own troubles; but the gentle heart given to meditation will find its way through them all, and the days will declare the secret the old man's prayers could not alter.

And so this lesson comes from the old time to the new, in this parable of two lives: That there is a law of life Heaven will not tamper with for all our prayers, a steady sequence of cause and consequence we have to abide by whether we like it or not; a right way and true, touching these foundations of our life, out of which Bibles may grow in the long succession of the ages, and a line of men and women whose life will enrich the world. This, and a wrong way that will lead on to a hapless life full of wild deeds that end in a clouded heaven, and this life will go on also until the evil has wrought itself out by the mercy of God. We may say what we will, therefore, about standing ready to suffer for our own misdeeds, and to

pay as we go: the woe of it is, that no man liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself, and the shadow of such a truth is just as sure as the light.

It was among the teachings of a faith which has well-nigh passed away, that a man might be in the eternal felicity, and see his son weltering in the eternal fires, yet feel no heart-break over it, but still "praise God from whom all blessings flow." I wonder how it would be, if, in the light of this truth I am trying to touch, that son could cry from the deeps of his despair, "You put me here. We ought to change places," and as he said this, Heaven should flash her light on the whole woeful truth of it. I think there would be silence in heaven for more than the space of half an hour, so far as one singer was concerned, and, if the father did not get down to suffer with his son, there would be a revolution.

And, then, this lesson: How a man of no great natural power or splendid quality, if he

has this inward life in him by his birthright, and nourished forth in his breeding, bids fair to be of vastly more worth than the most superb piece of nature which was ever born and bred bare of this blessing. He is the Ishmael in the human family, and even at his best is only a noble and splendid animal, — the Jim Fisk, it may be, without the railroads, or the John Morrissey without the cards.

And this lesson: That there is no great hope for the child who has not the right mother, except as there is hope for all children. The father may be never so noble and faithful in his way, set his heart on the boy, and pray a prayer for him which will touch human hearts by its pure pathos after four thousand years. All the same, by this law we can trust and follow, it is the mother's nature which will give us this outward or inward man, the Isaac of the home or Ishmael of the desert. If she has caught into her heart the love of God and goodness, if she

cherishes a true loyalty to Heaven, like Mary, and turns the great moments of her life into a sweet communion, then she also shall have good children. But if within her heart there lurks the taint of idolatry to the god of this world, and she follows this as the load-star of her life, she will mould her children to her own inner likeness, and lead them after her own gods; and the end will be a great sorrow instead of a great joy, — a great sorrow, but not endless.

For, as in this old chapter from the history of one of the "first families," we have to see how, long after the children of the promise had fulfilled the promise in giving us the prophets and the Christ, and had been beaten and scattered as the thresher releases and scatters the grain, this wild man did come to something noble and good in its way after all; ripening into a man like Mahomet, and into a race like the Saracens in Spain, sweet and fine, while it lasted, as a Norway summer.

As this did come of Ishmael's line, because the wild man was never left to himself, and because the children of the promise also helped to lift him out of the dominion of the senses into a sense of the soul, so it is, in the long range of the Divine goodness, with this whole wild world. It wanders on in its own way, and riots and wrecks; but there is a saving running through all the spending. The lower life slowly makes way for the higher; the face learns first to turn to its Mecca, and then to heaven. Thousands of years your wild man may wander, but he wanders home at last to God, —

> "And learns to call upon his name,
> And in his faith create
> A household and a fatherland,
> A city and a state."

He sits down at last, poor wild man, clothed and in his right mind. "God makes himself an awful rose of dawn," and then we

see, somehow, that, as the shadow is to the light, so is Ishmael to Isaac; and He has perfected his picture as surely through this man's wandering in the desert as through that man's abiding in the home. But this is the truth for this day:—

> "Hold thou the good, define it well,
> For fear divine Philosophy
> Should push beyond her mark, and be
> Procuress to the lords of hell."

VII

The Primitive Idea of a Good Wife

Prov. xxxi. 10

THE picture we saw in our lesson of an old Eastern homestead must have been a study from the life; but no man can guess now who painted it, or who the good wife was we see there, or her good man, or where to look for the place on a map. All we know about the land is that it lay well toward the north, where the snow fell in winter, and good warm happing was needed because of the cold, and the days grew so short that you had to rise before dawn in the morning, and work after dark, or the day's work would not be well done.

And I suppose the picture was painted with no thought at all that it would ever

find a place in their Bible; but they loved it so for its own sake, that the day came when a wise seer no doubt said, "Why, this is good enough to go into the rolls we read in our synagogues, so let us set it at the end of our Book of Proverbs. The other men have had enough to say about evil women. We will match them with a good woman, and see what honey will do, if the aloes fail of their purpose, with the youth of our land."

So this was done; and there the homestead stands among the vines and olives all these ages, with the corn-lands about it, the cattle in the meadows, and the sheep on the uplands, and the goats; with the sun shining through the windows by day, and the lights gleaming out at morn and even for evermore. And the good genius of the home is this woman we see, who has not one word to say for herself, and yet stirs some human heart to speak for her to this fine purpose; who has no name, and yet has won the noblest; a woman

who, if this be indeed a study from the life, came to this man in her sweet, fair maidenhood, to be true wife to him, and was true wife; that and no more, that and no less. No slave of his whims and fancies, or wife to wonder in what mood he will come home, and whether his first word will be first cousin to a kiss or a blow; and no drudge to wear her life out in helping to make a fortune, as his first wife, he will spend in jewels on the second. True wife to true man; clothing herself afresh to his heart, as her beauty fades, with a beauty that cannot be seen. True wife and true mother; raising her children to make other homes like this they love so well; cossetting them a little, we may presume, and her grandchildren a great deal when their turn comes, for what would such a woman be if she did not nourish the "simple merry knack of tying sashes, fitting baby's shoes, of stringing pretty words that make no sense, and kissing full sense into empty words"?

So, true wife to true man, we can see her there in the far-away years, growing old at last, and not so active as she was, or so full of care. The snows fall softly on her hair, the afternoon shadows grow longer, and the sun sets, and she falls on sleep, never thinking in all those years that her memory would stretch beyond two generations; and yet here I am, after more than two millenniums and in a world she never heard of, setting her sweet old portrait in the light of a day of which she could not dream.

And in trying to open my thought, may I not ask you to notice, first, with what large free lines this picture is drawn. There is no such limitation to her nature as we have to note in some women, who are very good indeed, but then their worth is like the reports we hear of some rare old wine, — it takes up but little room, and is apt to be hidden away in cabinets, and only brought out and used *on choice* occasions. There is no such trouble

about this portrait of a woman of the old time and tenor. It is a large and ample nature God has given her, which not only fills the place completely, but is felt far and wide: so that, while some will say, she is such a man's wife, others will say when you ask about him, he is such a woman's husband; and so the honors will be divided.

You may notice also that she has what we call faculty; the quality a fine French-woman had who said that if she should fall on evil days she knew how to do twenty things by any one of which she could and would make her own living. In that busy home, where things are done very much as they were done in New England on the farms a hundred years ago, you feel sure there is not one thing she has to see to, she cannot do better than ever a woman she hires; and the place is in perfect order, because her own presence pervades it from cellar to attic. So there they are at the old

homestead, busy as bees, — the house-mother and the maids who will also be mothers some day and have homes of their own, while she is not only mother but missionary to them also, and her great plentiful nature overflows into finer issues than those that lie in bread and butter and home-made cloth and yarn.

It is not very often we see or hear of such a woman, again, so superb in faculty and oversight, who can maintain through it all a sweet and even temper. These demands on her life tell on the nerves, and she is apt to have what those who know her best call "a temper of her own," and the breath of her mouth has in it a touch of the east wind. Such an one was our good friend Mrs. Poyser. There are lovely touches of tenderness in the woman there who fronts the world and fights her battle; but how Martin Poyser managed to find the home a man wants to find within that old manor-house, I cannot even guess, nor can I guess how he would

ever make up his mind to stroke her hair after a few years, or say tender and loving words to her except when she was down with one of her fits of sickness, and then I think she would be apt to break in on it all with some question about the cream. But this good wife's nature is struck out in one line. "In her tongue is the *law* of kindness." So you can hear the sweet tones pervading the house always; and by ruling her own spirit she was queen in her own domain, while her good man would never think of the proverb, "It is better to dwell alone on the housetop than with a scolding woman in a wide house."

It may easily fall out, again, and does fall out, that your good woman who is so true to her home, and fills it so well, will be quite content with what the man calls her "sphere," and will not care to do any thing outside this, beyond what such women love to do in their quiet way, in the tender chari-

ties that come home to them as women, the social duties that belong to our finer life, and the care, it may be, of their church. It is the man's habit to say also, if he is much of a man, and has had the good fortune to win one of these noble women for his wife, "My dear, what do you know about business? You must leave that to ME." And then, if she has promised to obey him, — not if I marry them though, — there is no more to be said, and only one surmise to be made just here: That it is precisely because the man despises the woman's swift and sure intuition as the ally of his slower judgment, that so many of our business men come to grief, in so many unexpected ways, in our own time. Now, there may have been some little trouble of this sort in the way of this good wife; but if there was, it is all over and done with before we come across this picture, and she is not only caring completely for her home, but is also a capital woman of business. She

has money of her own, made or saved; has seen a lot that lies well to the sun, and will make a good vineyard; thinks the matter over carefully and well, sees her chance and seizes it, buys the field, and has it planted for a vineyard, and, let us hope, can leave it to whom she will. And then, if there has been a little cloud between them as they sat by the fire, I think I can see the good man open his eyes wide, and hear him say, "Why, my dear, you do understand business, after all."

I notice, again, it is not good marketing up there in the North: there is scant choice when you want to buy, and too many taking toll when you want to sell. But she is not only a good woman, and able, she is wise also, and so she opens a way directly to the primal buyer and seller, for so we must read the words which compare her to the merchant ships; while you cannot palm off on her a poor and mean article, for "she per-

ceiveth that her merchandise is good;" while of course, being the woman she was, the officers at the custom-house would not feel their life was made a burden to them between chivalry for her sex, and fidelity to their oath of office. I speak only as a man. So it is not in her home alone, you see, and in society, that this ample nature is content to move: she has her own bank account, and makes her own investments, and we may be sure made them wisely, or else her good man would never have said, "Many a man's daughter has done well, but thou excellest them all."

We might fairly infer, again, that with so many cares our good wife would grow a little careless about herself in the course of time, and neglect those nice points in her adornment, which, in despite of all we say about following the mode, do hold their own intrinsic worth in a woman's life. She *did not* make this mistake. She seems to

have said in her heart, "Did I adorn myself for the advent of my lover? well, that was not as the purple and gold anglers use to catch a fish withal: I will still adorn myself to please my husband. Has the glamour of those early days when we were lovers ripened into a sort of comradeship? then my comrade shall be as proud of his wife as he ever was of his sweetheart. Does yeoman Agur's wife over there on the next place say it makes no matter what you wear in the house, so that you keep a sharp lookout of the windows? it is not sound doctrine. Men, at the best, are curious creatures, and think a great deal more sometimes than they say. My good man shall never say I do not care more for the glance of his eye than I do for that of all the women between here and Jerusalem. Or, is there something in dressing to your fortune, again, and is the silkworm a factor in the scales of commerce and the arts as well as the flax-seed? then

what a woman of my fortune may do with a splendid propriety I will do, so that when my good man sitteth among the elders at the gate, they shall not whisper, 'A good man, and a very able wife; pity she should be such a fright!' Here, also, are my daughters growing up; and it will be the lovely old story over again of the youths coming with shining eyes to look on the maids who have taken them in the old sweet thrall. They shall feel no cold chill as they glance my way, and wonder whether maids so beautiful, and with such exquisite ways, will ever grow to be like their mother in bearing the cares and burdens of life. I will see to these things for my husband's sake, and theirs also, and the life in which we hold the right to move." So we see her *in* her best as well as *at* her best, in the fine old picture, and her clothing is silk and purple; while you see the household also, as well as herself, gleaming with touches of color, scarlet against the snow.

Then another fine touch comes in, we must not miss. There was a real danger that this woman who could easily have made her living doing twenty things, would lose her heart's pity and sympathy for those who could only do one, and were not clever even at that; and failing to understand how that could be so hard to them, which was so easy to her, nourish for them a certain scorn and contempt. Or, woman as she was, with this fine faculty in her for "making money," as we say, she might have come to have too hard a clutch on what she made; and because she had her eye also on another lot, which would lie so nicely in the lap of the first, and would go to Miriam while that went to Deborah, when she was through with earth and time, she must save every dollar and every egg, the hundredth part of a dollar, and so keep on saving and investing to the end of the chapter. Nor need we doubt that she could have easily recited reasons in plenty for such

a course, if she had been of that mind. The poor are thoughtless; they will not lay up for a rainy day; they are extravagant also, and wasteful, and do a sight of things we never think of doing, to their hurt and loss. Yes, and every word she could say might be true. Yet she would be an untrue woman for closing her heart to all these poor who came for some little gleaning from her bountiful harvest; and even if the good man should come to be hard and keen after money too, he would not like her so well, or hold her in such reverence, because men do not like themselves so well for such a reason. The question never came up. The fine, affluent nature responded well. "She stretches out" not her hand to the poor, but her *hands*. And I warrant you it was none of your back-door charity done by the maids, and therefore done all wrong. *She* stretches out her hands, this lady of mark, in embroidered silks, and does it for her own sake as

well as theirs, because she is God's almoner. So it is the crowning glory of the good wife, that she stays good and generous, and the purple has no steel under it fencing the heart against God's pity and his Christs.

There is one touch more, but it is like one of those fine touches Hogarth leaves hidden now and then in an inference. "I have not given her that upward look," the writer seems to be saying, "which is in the eyes of the saints." But then she never thought of her religion as something apart from or above her life. She simply lived it out day by day, without reference to frames and feelings. And so he only adds this line, "A woman that feareth — reverences — the Lord, she shall be praised." She has shown her faith by her works. What would you have more? So I will leave the fine old picture as he has left it, to draw one or two conclusions.

1. Let us all believe this for our comfort, if we need any now, or for our instruction,

if we shall need that to save against the time to come, that a woman of such a splendid nature and so strong a will must have found there were many hidden oppositions in her good man she had not suspected when she took him for better and worse; and he would have to say, more than once or twice, "Women, the best God ever made, are an enigma to a man;" and then they would both find out that with this faulty and finite nature they were both of kin to the infinite, and these mysteries of the unguessed must come to the surface now and then. Nor can lives so near revolve as the planets do, and never strike fire. But the sun would break out again after the electric fires had met in the mid-heaven of the home, and all things grow calm and sweet, and the trouble would be forgotten.

2. May I not say one modest word, also, about the fine power this good woman reveals, *as it rests* and turns on a good constitution,

— for he has painted us the picture of a woman healthy as May, — and say it for this reason?

It is matter of deep concern to a good many, that the woman over here is losing her hold on life, and there are no such wives and mothers as there were in the old days. There is one answer to this as a wide proposition. It had always been the outcry ever since we have kept the records; and if it were all true there would be no women by this time, and no men. It is not true in the wider sense. It is only true in any sense, as we forget or refuse to learn the great true laws of life, and, as this man says of this woman, fail to gird our loins with strength and strengthen our arms. That wise and good woman, Lucy Aikin, says in a letter to Channing, "Fifty years ago our ladies in England had pinched figures, pale faces, weak nerves, and miserable health. Then we began to discard the things that had worked such

mischief for us, wore stout boots, bid defiance to what we call foul weather, became great walkers; and now the new generation has a new bloom on the cheeks, active habits, firm nerves, and good constitutions." The great-grandmothers of the new race in England, then, were very much like our girls now, only not so peerless fair. The race has been restored to a splendor England never saw before; and ours also, wherever there is a touch of wisdom about the true laws of living, is gaining ground, and nowhere more surely than in New England, where I think the trouble began. You would not thank me to pursue this theme, but I could not pass it without this word. When the chief in one of the South Sea Islands wanted to be sent to another island as a missionary, his fellows said, "Yes, let him go. He is a two-handed man; he has a good wife who will take hold with him, and do what he cannot do." So will this race be, with the good wife to

double all the powers of the good husband. And her children will rise up to call her blessed, and her good man say, "Many women have done well, but thou excellest them all;" and *her* works also shall praise her in the gates.

VIII

Debt

2 Kings iv. 7

I KNOW of few things in our life so full of peril to a young man as running into debt. It has done more damage to our finest manhood than any other thing I can think of, except drinking whiskey; and to a good many men there is no danger from that, even, so long as they stand free from this curse. But a man is driven into the second evil often in trying to forget the first, or to abate its burden; and so he is like one who tries to escape from some place so dark that he can bear it no longer, — to find the light he plunges into, ending in a conflagration.

Debt is the old story of the slave who was told by his tyrant to forge a fetter for his limb, and then to forge a chain one link a day,

and then to drag along the ever-growing load until he lay down in his tracks to die. But it is the old story with this difference: that the debtor accepts the fetter and chain as a favor; thinks he can easily unlock the thing before long, and go free; finds this is all the time growing harder to do, while each day adds a new link to the chain; and revolts in the measure of his sterling honesty from saying, "I will drag the chain no longer," because he knows he is bound to drag it to the last sore pinch by a law to which we must stand true, — the holy law of obligation. Then if, for his life, he feels he must be free, and has to go through the courts, the brightest day he can think of is the day when he shall have paid the last cent he owes, or when those who have trusted him shall say, "We know you have done your very best to pay your debts. It is a misfortune we must bear together: here are your vouchers, put them in the fire."

That is about the best release we can imagine for this sad burden; but the worst is, that a man may be able to break the fetter, and care so little about it, that, if he can find some one to trust him, he begins at once to forge another; breaks this, and so keeps on until the sin smites through his life, and ruins all the safeguards God sets about us as we set fences about fair gardens. Then those who might look up to him by reason of his ability, look down on him by reason of his character, as a man who will not keep faith with his fellows; and pity at the best takes the place of respect.

So runs the story of many men who have made shipwreck of fortune, character, and life itself, within my knowledge, seeking graves that were opened by their own hands; or who still live to work more mischief, and cover themselves with a deeper disgrace and shame. So, what word can be said to the new generation, every serious man, who has

seen much of life, should ask, not in the pulpit only, but at the fireside, and in the stores and schools and workshops, which may help those who have to take hold as we leave go, so that they may never come to the sorrow and loss which has overtaken the elder generation in our time.

And it is not true, as we might well imagine, that only those of a poor and shiftless sort drift into debt, who, being hardly able to make the world about them aware they are in it by the weight of their intrinsic worth, gather moment by every cipher in the sum they can manage to owe, so that when death comes to close the account there is a keener sense of loss among their creditors than might have come through the death of much better men. And if this were the only man who is taken in these traps, or who takes honest men in them rather, it would be bad enough ; but I might spare this talk, because the chances are, they would

not be here to hear me, while the creditors of such men who take their risk at cent per cent perhaps might be left to pocket their loss. But the worst of the curse, as we elder men know, is this: that it so very often takes our choicest young men captive, and drags them down to this shame; young men with that eager and high spirit in them through which so much is done; men of a genuine honesty, so far as good intentions go, when they set out in life, and who run into debt, if they don't take care, with some such feeling as your eagle has for a great wall. "I can soar over it," they say, "never fear. Once let me spread my wings, and find free play, and I shall be free from this at one flight." Nor is it the fetter and chain we saw just now, to which these finer natures become imprisoned. It is rather a thread of golden wire so fine they do not see it at first or feel it; but day by day other threads are bound about them, and these twist themselves

at last into a cable from which they find it very hard and bitter work to get free.

I see these new men waking up to face the new day. There are thinkers among them, and orators, statesmen, and great merchants, if they will only take care. They may not take care; and then, though they still attain to the eminence, it may be with them as it was with grand old Walter Scott, who, as he sat on the green at Abbotsford, dying of overwork through debt, threw off his wrappings, moaning, "This will never do. I must get to my work;" and when he tried, could not hold a pen, or dictate a word, but sat still with the tears running down his fine old face, beaten in the brave battle and slain by debt. Such young men as I think of may be ready to create new homes, bring a family about their knees, and be in God's stead, almost, to the little community within the four walls. But this fair promise may be blighted too. Yes, and I can see how they may lay this

thing to heart, and say, "I will make it as the one thing needful to pay my way from the start, and keep right on; for this is the one safe thing to do." I see such men growing old at last, their homes standing on strong foundations, and their children rising up to call them blessed.

And if, once more, my years have brought me any wisdom, this danger from debt follows very straight and simple lines. It was said of Edgar Poe, that he was a millionnaire who never had a dollar to his name; and I have a friend who said to me once with a real sadness, "I have the fortunes of a pauper with the tastes of a prince." Well, you shall have a gold-mine in your brain, as my friend has, with this trouble in you also, and never be free from this curse of spending when you cannot spare. A wise old Roman said once that not to have a mania for buying whatever strikes your fancy, is to possess a revenue. And no truer word has ever been said about

these debts which are made from over-spending, this weaving of the fine wires that take us captive.

I knew a man some years ago whose genius was in itself a noble fortune, and who might be said to talk golden eagles; but here was the trouble with him: he had this mania for buying every thing that took his fancy. Bring him to New York with five hundred dollars in his pocket, and set him down in Madison Square, and the chances would be, that by the time he reached the Battery he would not have ten dollars left, or would be five hundred dollars in debt, if he could get the merchants to trust him; and no thing he had bought would be of any real use to him. Now, what was the result? I will tell you. He was kept grinding to earn money, like a blind horse in a mill, or like the poor creatures I always pity so, on the threshing-machines, that are always climbing, but still stay down, and have to be content, when

their day's work is done, with the raff and refuse of the grain. It is but the instance of a vice which has eaten like a cancer into our life, and wrought untold disaster.

You come to a city like this, from your wholesome country homes, with the power in you to win your way to a good place. You begin low down, and hold on for a time to the careful habits in which you have been trained, and make ends meet, and something over. The firm is generous, or, it may be, only selfish; it wants, at any rate, to keep its good men, and so it promotes you. Then you have more money, and you know the reason why. You are worth more. Then the world about you begins to notice you are a rising man, and invites you to its feasts and frolics; and there is a fine grain in you which makes it hard to refuse, or to be mean in the matter of paying the world back in its own coin. So there may be no evil in *you when this* happens: yet this vice will

creep in of spending for a score of things that are proper to society, but are a threat, all the same, to the sincere safeguards of your life. And you may not run into debt as yet, but you have come to where they draw the golden wires. You spend all you earn, with the feeling you can make more; and you do make more, but then you spend that too.

Moreover, you find a wife some day, very much to your mind; but you cannot begin life in a couple of rooms, with a hempen carpet and cane chairs, because society might turn its back on you, and society is now your god. But you find new powers to meet the new demand, and begin business for yourself, or are promoted again, and still might do well if you would keep close to the solid and sure things you understand; but the fatal lesson young men have learned, of being able, as they imagine, to command success, steals in, and lures you after vain shadows.

We must be patrons of the arts, perhaps, and buy pictures with the money we shall need some day to tide us over a panic; and are not content with the modest house we can pay for as we can pay for a loaf of bread, but must rent a mansion. Then the oil men come along, or the silver-mine men, and show us what they call "a good thing," and say they will "let us in," and they do. So we drift into speculations we understand no more than the man in the moon, or think we can clutch ten thousand dollars in a month from those wise and wary men on Wall Street, who have given a lifetime to watching the rise and fall of stocks, — take it all in, as we imagine, at a glance; and this is the story of the wreck and ruin of thousands of men of a fine promise, who, twenty years ago, were on the way to a fair fortune.

But I say that no one lesson men can learn, whose life lies in the main before them, can be of a deeper moment than this:

That if we devour all the corn we can raise in the seven good years, or go sowing it on the barren wastes of speculation, we shall have to hang round the garners of the prudent and careful when the seven years of scarceness come, and implore, when we might command. "How is it," they said to the good Scotchwoman, "that your son John, who had so fair a chance when you set him up in business, should have broken down, while you began with nothing at all, and are now well off?" — "I will tell ye," she answered. "When we began, my auld man and me, we lived on oatmeal and haver bread, and a' things of that sort, but when we began to be weel-to-do we would noo and then have a chicken; but the trouble wi' John and his wife is, that they began wi' the chicken, and noo they can hardly get the oatmeal."

That has been the trouble with thousands who twenty years ago caught the trade-winds to a fair fortune; while, if we could explore

the secret of hosts of men who have made fortunes, and have not one dirty dollar in their account, we should find they began with the oatmeal, and let the chicken wait. Did not trust at all to their genius for carving out a fortune while they spent one, but made sure of the overplus in the good times which would tide them over the bad.

So the first thing to be sure about is this: Do not spend money you cannot well spare. If you buy a Bible, even, you cannot afford to buy just then, you wander to where the wires are set, and may do more harm to yourself thereby than the Bible will ever do you good. Nay, I will say more than this. If you so misread your Bible as to trust God will take care of you when you ought to take care of yourself in this most sacred business of paying as you go, you had better sell your Bible at the first old book-store, and buy "Poor Richard's Almanack," or "The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin."

I like that word of a sound divine who says that next to the grace of God, paying our debts right along is the best means of grace in the world to deliver us from a thousand snares.

And, if such a word as this should miss its mark, there would still remain a great cloud of witnesses, we elder men remember, who have stripped themselves to the bare bone to keep their good name, and are brooding over their broken fortunes, and their lives robbed of hope and joy. Men who struck on the rocks over which it seemed easy enough to ride when the high tides of prosperity were running full and free, but that are fatal as death if you are in the channel when the tide goes down, and the storm comes up, and there is no escape. "Do you know where all the reefs and shallows are hereabout?" they said to the old pilot. "Not sure I do," was the answer; "but I know where the deep water is, and so I get

along." It is what we should know about this danger from debt: I must know where the deep water is. I must disdain to be a royal spender, contract no debts, and take no risks I cannot see through or make good. And then I go far to compel Fortune herself to give bonds for my success; but failing here, it is as when the spring fails in my watch.

I knew a man in my youth who was a pattern of piety; but he ran deep into debt, insured his property for quite all it was worth, was told it was on fire one morning, but would not turn out and see to it until he was through with family prayers. The place burned down; and then he tried to collect the insurance, but the insurance men said, "No." And there were good people who said this was all wrong, and he did right to have family prayers before he went to put out that fire; while the honest and *manful world* about him said that to put out

the fire first, and then say his prayers, would have been the most honest course to take, to say nothing about its piety. He went down, and his good name with him, and is buried in a lost grave on the other (under) side of the world.

Dr. Johnson said of a man in his day, he had no genius, but he was so true to his pledge, that if he had promised you an acorn, and none grew in England that year, he would send to Denmark for one rather than break his pledge. It was a grand thing to say of a man; and it comes home to the heart of my thought, for, of all the promises I know of, my promise to pay stands among the first.

Now, to close my talk, I might tell you to say some little prayer over all this, and I will not tell you not to — God forbid! But would you not also do this at the prompting of one who has seen a great deal of ruin wrought through debt and easy-going spend-

ing, with no resolute will to save, on his way through this world? Would you not see where the leaks are in your young life, if there be any; where the wires are that may as yet be almost invisible, but which may grow to cables or chains in a few years' time? And then, would you do a little sum for me, and so for yourselves? Take your pencil, and find what even a dollar a week may come to, well invested, in ten years and then in twenty, and so on to the end of the chapter, and then see how much better you can do than that even, and yet be in every way a generous and kindly gentleman in the measure of your means. For in asking you to keep out of debt, and be careful in your outlay, I advocate no meanness. Money may be bought too dearly; and we may any of us run some risk of becoming like the old Scotch nobleman, who would not give his tenant a quittance for the rent until he had hunted up a missing bawbee. He brought

the coin, and then said, "Noo, my lord, I will give you a shilling if you will let me see all the money you have." He took him at his word, showed him all his treasure, and then the farmer said, "That will do. I am just as rich as ye are noo. I have seen all the money, but I cannot spend a pound of it, nor can ye, my lord, either." He was richer than the old lord; he was free from the chains the money had made for him. I would have you so free; and yet I would speak to you as my sons touching this need to keep free from the other and more woful fetter of debt. We can save if we will, and still spend for all fair and true purposes; and the wise and prudent do save, while the heedless spend as they go, and it may be we take hold and help them. I never quite digested one of the best dinners I ever sat down to in my life, because it came out afterward that my host owed for that dinner and a great many more. There may be danger

on the other side. The habit of saving may grow on us so that we shall never bloom out into a sweet and generous manhood; but this will always be the exception, not the rule, among the men we breed in this New World, while this is the contrast all through between such men and your heedless spender: That, cleaving to strict and stern justice in their dealings, as your "close" men always do, the day never comes when they do not keep their side of the contract. Do not run into debt, then. Save, that you may spend. Do what a true man may do to provide things honest in the sight of all men. Owe no man any thing, in this noble way, and then you will make all men your debtors for the sterling and noble ensample you set to the world about you.

IX

Sleep

John xi. 12

I NOTICE the old Bible-men make much of sleep; there seems to be more in it by far, for them, than there is for the men of our time. The first man falls asleep before the blessing, which can alone make it worth his while to wake again, can come to him, — that is, the first woman. The great ancestor of Israel wakes from a deep slumber, and is satisfied once for all about his future, which, up to this time, had been hidden in a sort of mist. And Jacob sleeps alone on the hills, — a youth far away from his home; and there is a blessing for him in the slumber which was not in the watching. So they go on sleeping through the books and ages in

these old Bible times, while by story and prophecy, by psalm and wise saying, we are taught how a spark smitten out of sleep can kindle and renew the most potent forces of life. To sleep well, to their mind, is to do well; and it is a more gracious condition, when the true time comes, than to be ever so wide awake.

Yet it is very curious, again, to notice how, with this teaching of the Bible touching the worth of sleep, there has been a constant fight with it on the part of many who would be the last men in the world to allow that they held the Divine Book of a small account when it does not fit their humor. So your Romish saint has often been a man who could stay awake longer than any other man of his day, rise at the most unnatural hours, and banish sleep from his eyes and slumber from his eyelids, so that he was a world's wonder. One of these saints — St. John of the Cross, as he is called — would only sleep

a few minutes each night, and then it was with his head on a spike instead of a pillow. Among the sterner sort in the reformed churches also, sleep has been deemed something to be ashamed and afraid of. "I am guilty," good Richard Baxter cries, "for all the sleep I enjoy over three hours in the twenty-four." And I found, the other summer, it was very hard work indeed for me to get through the door of his pulpit in Kidderminster; but it was ample enough, no doubt, for the man, thin as he was, and worn by hard labor and much watching. "Sleep is Death's younger brother," Sir Thomas Browne says, "and so like him, that I never dare trust him without my prayers." And Jeremy Taylor, I notice, allows himself not more than three or four hours sleep, and sometimes not even that: while William Law, a man of the purest religious genius and life, says, "Strive daily after the spirit of renouncing sleep; it is the poorest and dullest thing possible to

a man." So the more religious you are, in those days, the more unlikely you will be to regard this great function of our life as a blessing falling softly about you from heaven.

And there were tracts printed in my youth, and are still, I presume, meant to make us ashamed for ourselves, and to fear for our children, through telling how much time we spend in sleep, which would be so much better spent, in the opinion of the writers, in staying broad awake. So very good men, in their way of being good, still seem resolute to forget the hints which come to us from the Bible, of the way God has compassed some of his most delicate and far-reaching providences while men slept. How Abraham was confirmed then, and Jacob comforted, Joseph warned, and Daniel instructed, and Elijah recovered while sleeping long and well under the juniper-tree; how Paul was succored and directed while he slept, and

Peter saved from quite an overplus of bigotry; how the Psalmist sings of God giving his beloved sleep; and how, in the oldest sacred book, there is solemn and beautiful insistence of the truth that God speaks "when deep sleep falleth on man, that he may keep back his soul from the pit." So the records run. Yet sleep is still something to be cried down, I suppose, by a great many good souls, and to be reduced to its lowest minimum. "Lord," they seem to say, "if he sleep he shall *not* do well;" do their best to show that no good, wholesome, persistent sleeper shall enter the kingdom of heaven; and remember the words of Jesus perfectly, "Cannot ye watch one hour?" but quite forget the tender allowance that follows, "Now sleep on, and take your rest."

Now, we have good ground, I think, for quite another conclusion from this, in the help Science brings us first of all toward a true conception of this noble function, through

which, indeed, she is reversing the judgment of the saints, and teaching us that when we sleep, as when we wake, we shall do well; teaching us that as a rule, subject to such variations as may lie within each man's nature, a good, sound, restful sleep, of let us say eight hours, is, in its own way, holiness, while not to sleep so much as that, if we need so much, is a sin. So that a man like Baxter, with his nerves all on the surface, and his delicate frame, ought to have blamed himself because he slept so little, and said, "I shall be a better man every way, and so, of course, a better Christian, if I can sleep more; therefore I will strive after this blessing as I strive after truth and virtue."

Because the first truth we touch is this, that a good sound sleep is, in the best and truest sense, what we may well call *re*-creation. In our active and troubled day, the books tell us, the pulse beats faster and faster, and the torrents of life increase hour

by hour in volume and intensity. Action, conflict, thought, labor, and care demand fresh efforts; and through all this, and by it all, as when with file and emery-wheel you work at some delicate piece of mechanism, so all day long, through this process, the fine tissue of life is worn away.

I use my hands and eyes, my brain and muscle, my nerve, and that wonder within the nerve no man can reach; and whatever I use is wasted, or, shall we say, passes into other forms. So the words which are spirit and life when they reach you, are in some sense material substances when they leave the speaker. The finest ideals of the painter reach back into the finest organisms, and draw on these for the picture as well as on some higher power. And the immortal numbers of the poet, also, are born of a mortal body; yes, and as the body is, so are the numbers, so that Pope could no more write like Tennyson, or Byron like Wordsworth, or

Herrick like George Herbert, than grapes can grow on thorns, or figs on thistles.

Here, then, is the worker, but within the worker stands the watcher. All day long there is a guardian angel bending over these fine tissues and substances of life, to see that they shall not be wasted beyond the line at which they can be made good again when "God giveth his beloved sleep." So when the true time comes, if we are wise to heed the angel, he whispers his word and weaves his spell; and we enter — not into the shadows of death, for that is a wretched mistake, but into the portals of a new life. Then these exhausted and wasted powers, fevered and feeble by the long day's work, feel the touch of renovation. If our sleep is that which nature has ordained, there are workers we know nothing of, so shy that they stop instantly and hide themselves when we do know, — these restore the balance for us, weave new tissue for every wasted nerve and

fibre, tone down the pulse again to its healthy beat, store new treasures of spiritual force and fire within the brain, transform us into new men and women; and then when all this is done, and well done, the bells can ring and call us to our labor or our prayers. But they ring before this at our peril. It is not in the service of God we wake before our time, except there be some clear need, which will not be said nay, for such waking; and no good man will try to save his soul even at the cost of so badgering and injuring his body. He may well do that for others when the need comes, but not for himself.

When the old saint had cheated himself out of his rest so that he could not sleep at all, and was like to die, it was borne in on him to repeat his paternosters just as long as he could drone them out, and this would banish the fiend, he imagined, that was tormenting him. Well, he went off to sleep with the beads in his hand, and then concluded that

the Evil One is helpless to keep you awake if you still persist in saying your paternosters. But I think he should have said that to go through such a sing-song is as when you rock a child in the cradle. There was no evil spirit about, except one of his own creation; and we can all create such an one if we persist in staying awake beyond the line Nature and the grace of God has drawn for our sleeping.

For, if the positive is true, so is the negative. Some mighty hunger to do things shall make us deaf to the whisper of this good angel of sleep; then all through the day and far into the night we can work, while the organisms waste beyond the power of this merciful provision for their re-creation, and then, because the balance is lost, the forces of life run faster and faster while the channels waste away, and the pressure on the brain and nerve becomes more tremendous while all the time we become less able to

bear it. The energies are wasted faster than they can be made good again by such sleep as we allow ourselves to take; and then we take that, perhaps, to sustain us in the struggle, which should never be touched for such reasons. We beat back these affluent mercies which come for our saving through sleep; use eyes, nerves, and brain with quite a savage energy; and use up principal and interest together. And so we drive on until we break down; then we send for our doctor to set us right again, who looks us over, makes his diagnosis, and says, —

> "'Tis nervous prostration, 'tis fever within;
> He calls it a sickness, I call it a sin."

I note this truth, again, about a good sound sleep I remember times, it may be you do also, when it was no use working any longer; and so we went to sleep with a feeling of despair about us, to wake up again in the sweet still morning to find the figures all

ready to take their place in the problem, the lines riveted fast in the memory, the perplexity growing clear in our business, or the argument completed, so that it seemed as if some defter spirit than our own had been doing these things for us, or some friend had come and sown wheat over the tares of our half-frustrated yesterday.

So Coleridge sleeps, you remember, and hears them whisper a poem, of which, when he wakes, he can only catch a fragment; but no finer fragment ever fell on the human ear. It touches the mystery and melody of the inner heavens. And Dr. Carpenter, in his fine chapter on sleep, has many things to tell us of the way in which these powers have grown strong and sure while men slept, and how the most intricate problems or arguments would be found written down next morning, and the hand and brain wist not what the spirit had done.

There seems to be some such blessing for

the spirit in sleep, then, as there is for the body; not alone fresh fuel, but a purer flame. And we may presume such boons as these are hidden away in every life as it steals silently through the night; and when deep sleep falleth on men, God openeth their ears and sealeth their instruction. The cup of the spirit holds the fresh dews of the morning. The dust of yesterday is swept from its chambers, noble ideas and aspirations become natural again, new suggestions come trooping in, and we give them good welcome, and wake farther on in life, as well as in time. In our waking hours we think and feel, in our sleep we *become*. The poet finds in the morning sweeter imaginations, the thinker profounder principles, the preacher more pregnant arguments, and the very worker at the anvil, a more subtle turn of the wrist, and the stroke that goes right home. None of us who sleep well begin the new day where we left the old. Each man in his

rest has silently advanced to a new position. He can watch the world from a higher summit, and be aware of a wider sky than that on which the sun set yesterday. His flesh is fresh as that of a little child; he returns toward the days of his youth.

"Last night I weighed, quite wearied out,
The questions that perplex us still,
And that sad spirit we call doubt
Made the good naught against the ill.
This morning, when with rested mind
I try again the self-same theme,
The whole has altered, and I find
The balance turned, the good supreme.
A long sweet sleep, a good night's rest,
Has changed the look of all that is.
Sure, any creed I hold at best
Needs humble holding after this."

Now, let me draw a few simple lessons from this truth I have tried to open. You, young men, must remember that one grand factor in your well being and well doing will

lie in a good sound sleep. You may think it does not matter: take my word for it, — the word of a man who has had to walk through rugged ways to his threescore years and three, — that it does matter a great deal.

Your sleep is the hidden treasure of your youth to-day, and to-morrow it will be the margin you will have to draw on for your age. Do you think you can racket round into the small hours, snatch a brief repose, and then be just as good as ever to hold and bind? it is not true. Many a young man sells his birthright in this way, and cannot have it back again, though he seek it with many tears. Take your honest eight hours sleep, if you may: there is life in it and grace. It is one of the good angels which will save you from the temptation to drink, give you an even mind, brighten all your powers, and do many things for you no other power can do.

So when you get farther on, and are in

the thick of the world's business, do not forget what virtue lies in this good habit. You may make more money by sitting up nights, but the chances are you will not keep it; carve out a good business, and then have to quit; or grow eminent in your profession, and then break down. Good fortune turns greatly on good habits, and this is one of the best. We can go just so far, and then we have to fall back on Nature and on God for new power. But if we say, "I will work double tides," and so get fevered and out of true with the true laws of success in life, then the day comes when our power turns to something like paralysis. Your true business or professional man is the man who rises well rested, with a cool clear brain and steady nerve, — the man who can shake off business after business hours, go to sleep like a yearling child, and rise like the sun, rejoicing as a strong man to run a race.

And that word, a yearling child, reminds

me, that if you quit yourselves like men, and all is well with you, the time is coming when you will have children to care for; and then you must remember that "if he sleep he shall do well," is true also of the child. Because we have enough of the old leaven in us still to prompt us now and then to try and make our children ashamed of over-sleeping, while, if they are healthy children, the chances are that this is what they cannot do. They may want to go all wrong about the time for going to sleep; they are very apt to do that. All the same, our children must not be tormented with the idea that all the sleep they want, and therefore need, is either a sin or a shame. Indeed, it is true that with the high pressure the schools put on their delicate little minds, and the keen quality which seems to be in the very air they breathe, they do need all the sleep they can compass. It is the breath of their life, the building-up of their body, the other

half the task they have only half done, and the help of the good angel when our help fails. No cruelty can well be worse than this that would rob the children of even the fringes of this robe which falls on them out of heaven; and no grace better than this gospel, "if *they* sleep they shall do well."

So this is the conclusion of the whole matter. These powers of ours are not to be superseded, but made sacred; and this power by which we win new power is a sacred thing. Once sure that it is sleep and not stupor, recreation and not wasting, it is something to thank God for with all our heart. And it is a great mistake in good men to say this is a shameful waste of time, when it may be, and so often is, the best possible use of time; or, that we should be at our work or our prayers, while still we need this on which the worth of the work or the prayer is to turn.

I say, that to sleep one hour more in such a case is better than either to labor or to pray, and may bring us nearer both to God and man.

X

A Noble Anger

Eph. iv. 26

I THINK sometimes when I hear men talk about the sin of anger, that it would not be amiss to speak now and then about its holiness also, so that one might see how it is not always a vice to be ashamed of, but may be a virtue to be proud of in its true time and place, and as good and true a thing as we can ever nourish in our hearts.

We might suspect, indeed, that there must be two sides to the question, when we notice how it is as natural for us to be angry as it is to use our hands and feet, and is something we do not have to learn, but is right there, as we say, a primitive instinct, like *those* of eating and drinking, or laughter and

tears. And so we detect traces of its presence in the infant of days, against the chill of this strange new world into which it has been ushered, and the hunger; while those who have raised many children need no very fine ear to detect its ever-growing strength in almost any child Heaven may have sent them, when the weeks have grown to months and years, or to learn that "here is the old Adam cropping out again," as the father is apt to say so often, and the mother so seldom.

And there are two ways of accounting for this inbred instinct. We can say that it *is* the old Adam cropping out in the very cradle, and here is proof before letters of our innate depravity; or we can say it is no such thing, but the indication of a power as good and true in its own time and place as any we can have and hold; capable, to be sure, as all our powers are, of being turned to base and ignoble uses, yet not to

be branded for that reason as only evil and that continually, but to be guarded and guided to a true and good purpose. We can sin with our hands and feet, with our eyes and ears, and our tongues; but who would say these are depraved, therefore, in the marrow of their intention, or that love is depraved because it may turn to lust, or loyalty, because men say there is honor among thieves?

So we can sin through anger, and do sin; but this evil use must not blind us to the noble purpose of this passion, any more than when good wheat is turned into whiskey, on which men get drunken to their hurt and shame. The power may be, nay it must be, all right, while the use we very often make of it is all wrong; and so one feels bound to believe that on this ground there is room for the faith that a noble anger has its own true place and its own fair use in our human life.

And it will help us to see what worth there is in a noble anger, if we will note for a moment or two what a grand part it has played in our human history, and how men of the finest quality, and the noblest, have been most capable of feeling and flinging forth its burning fires, and of doing through their anger what they never could have done through a temper as sweet and placid as an inland lake on a still summer's day.

Had Luther's temper, for instance, been as even and sweet as that of Erasmus, the world would still have waited for the trumpet-blast which ushered in the Reformation. No quality in Luther was of a greater worth in the work God gave him to do, than this of waxing to a white passion, and then hurling the bolts of his mighty anger out of the fire. Or, had the old lion of England never roared and leapt in men like Cromwell and Fairfax, and lain within the onset of the Ironsides and the Great Parliament; then,

for all we can see or say, the foot of the Stuarts might still have been on the nation's neck, and England — Heaven only knows where. Or, had all your fathers, again, been as placid and gentle as some of them were, we may well ask where the American Republic would have been to-day? They were not placid and gentle. They were men capable of this noble anger; men who could speak words of fire, and send them flying across land and sea, and, when they found this was all no use, could take the paper on which such words were written, and wad it well down into their muskets, while every thud of the ramrod was the answer to a thud of the heart. They tried prayers, protests, and petitions; they were of no use: and then they got angry, and the town-meetings were smitten with cloven tongues like as fire. The eagle came down in the place of the dove; the pulpit shook with the anger of the preacher; the bells clanged their summons

from the steeples, calling men to arms; lights were hung out, sending their angry glare through the night; there was anger in the gallop of the horsemen rushing to the fray; and then there was an end and a beginning in the rattle of the muskets, and the roar of the cannon, of the American Revolution.

So you will see how no question we can think of could involve us in a more curious and capital contradiction, than the claim that a power of so much worth to the race is worse than worthless when you trace it home to the man. Or, when we hear it said of a man that he was never known to be angry in his life, and must have been far better, therefore, than the common average, may we not venture on the surmise, that, if this is the best proof we can offer for the claim that he was a saint, there must have been times in his life when he would have grown still more saintlike in the square of his capacity for such noble sinning as lies in a right and

true anger? I would not allow for an instant that the men I have taken for my instances might be very good in their way, but such anger was a blot on their scutcheon and not an emblazonment of glory; or, that such a spirit must be deplored in each man, while we have to admit its worth now and then to the race. Anger, I notice, in our good honest Saxon, means a constriction of the heart: it has grown too big for the breast; there is no even and gentle action in it any more, if you listen, but a mighty stroke which sets the whole man afire. "Anger," Bishop Butler says, "was designed by the Author of nature, not only to incite us to act vigorously in defending ourselves from evil, but to engage us in defending the helpless;" and the good bishop is a safe and true teacher. So, while I know very well that charity suffereth long and is kind, there are times, all the same, I say, when Charity must stand back, and let Severity take her place

and burn to the bone. No greater mistake can well be made than to conclude that this constriction of the heart, for due reason, is somehow not of God, or godlike; or, that the men who have risen to its grand demands may be proud of what they have done, and we may be proud for them, but we must all be sorry for such a temper. The temper is the very thing of all others to be glad for. The horse-shoe on their brow, in such a case, is the patent of their nobility. They were whole men because they were angry men, and could burn and flame for such imperial reasons.

But here I must halt, lest you and I should be exalted above measure, who may be ready to conclude too easily we do well to be angry for poor and petty reasons, it may be, in no wise worthy this majestic power,— young men, because they are strong; and old men like myself, perhaps, because touch-wood is easily set afire. We have to make sure

first that it is a noble anger, and not some ignoble make-believe; and then, to see how the most momentous interests of our life may be put in peril in our failure to feel this noble passion, and answer to its demands.

On the first of these questions I am not sure I can say a word you do not know as well as I do, because only those of the rarest quality escape the reproach of their own hearts for getting angry on slight and poor occasions. When the old Scotchman said to the laird, "I must leave your service, sir. I canna stand your temper," and the laird answered, "You had better stay: you know I am no sooner in one of my tempers than I am out again." "True," the poor man answered; "but the trouble is, ye are no sooner out of one of your tempers but ye are in again, and so I will just gang away." Now, that man's anger was not a power, but a weakness. He squandered the noble gift *on mean* and small demands. He was like a

man who is forever swearing, in contrast with one who uses modest and gentle words until in some supreme moment of a mighty indignation, — such as they say came more than once to Washington, — the pent-up power breaks down all the barriers; and then it is like the cursing Psalms, or the comminations in Deuteronomy. We must put no indignity, then, on this noble gift. It is at our peril we let our anger degrade itself down to a bad temper. We must have the strength to hold it high for a beacon, and not turn it into a torch which hisses and smokes in the mire of mean and poor emotions; or waste this fine might of our proper manhood, as the vessels in our river blow off their steam, vexing everybody near them with the clamor, and then just swinging to the dock.

The power to be angry abides in you and me for a far nobler end than that. We also must "ride on the whirlwind, and direct the storm," when such occasions rise in our life.

I know of nothing greater in its own true place than a right anger, as I know of few things more paltry and poor in a man than to be forever getting angry.

And this lesson so many of us have to learn, we must teach to our children when they come to us, — that there is no harm in a high temper if they will keep it for noble uses, for it will be a very grand factor then in the sum of their life. Because it is a great mistake to leave our children ignorant touching the greatness and worth of this gift, and to be forever harping, as some do, on its meanness; or to try to break their temper, as we say, instead of keeping it whole and sound for the sterner demands of their life. You will see an indignation now and then in a well-nurtured boy, equal in its way to any thing you shall find in Knox or Luther, — beautiful and generous, and replete with self-abnegation; and when we see that, we should *be glad* for it to tears. For to strike fire

and blaze out over cowardice, falsehood, or cruelty, is still more beautiful in them than it can be in us, because it is fresher from the deeps of a divine revolt, more like the anger of the angels we see in the old pictures, but do not see in the new, now that even genius seems to have lost track of this most noble passion.

On my second head of a true and noble anger, this is to be said, as the conclusion of the whole matter: that it is something we should neither be ashamed nor afraid of. It is the constriction and revolt of the heart against that which no true man should tolerate, or woman. We all know what worth there is in a gentle pity and charity, and how divine these endowments are; but this is also divine. The most godlike nature which ever wore the garb of the flesh was angry on true occasion, and platted a whip of whipcord, and drove out the beasts, and overturned the tables of the money-changers in

the temple, saying, "My Father's house is called a house of prayer, but ye have made it a den of thieves." And the great prophets grew angry when they must, and the saints, because this was the only way open to them there and then through which they could smite the evil things that degrade and deform our life. Nor must we imagine such a temper is not in accord with the gentlest pity and charity we can nourish in our hearts, because it may be through the very perfection of this high grace in us that we say our mighty word, or strike our mighty stroke. What manhood is there in me worth the name, if I feel no strong anger over the things I hear and read about the ruin of innocent girls, yes, and boys too, the robbing of widows and orphans, and a thousand things equally of kin to the Devil and his angels? It is as natural to burn and flame out in anger over such things as it is to see, and as good as it is to pray, — yes, and to

hold in durance Paul's gentle suggestion that you shall not let the sun go down on your wrath, until you see how the account stands; because the reason for such a spirit may be more imperious to-morrow than it is to-day, and then I had better betake myself to the Arctic Circle, where I can have sun-up for half a year, than not have it out with the evil thing once for all.

And I say no word to you I would not take home, as you will have seen, to myself. People say sometimes a minister should never get angry. They say it because they imagine that to give way to this spirit is always to be on the doubtful side. I have been a long time in the ministry now, and have only this to say, that a minister must wax angry now and then, or he is no proper man, and he loses neither dignity nor power through this strong passion, but may win both; while "a linked sweetness, long drawn out," which will never permit him to give

way to the great constriction, may gender the suspicion that something has been left out in the making of such a man, or he has lost it as the man lost the talent he hid away in a napkin. He must not and will not care much about his own private matters. We are none of us of such moment as to warrant much outlay of this splendid treasure on ourselves. But when a great principle comes into peril, or a far-reaching duty confronts us, and we find that gentle words and ways are of no more use than a feather is against an elephant, then we may be angry. I may, or you may, summon all the forces to the battle with falsehood, wrong, cruelty, evil deeds or loathsome, and become each in our degree the synonyme of an angry angel. We do not lose our temper then, we find it; and it is neither a sin nor a shame. Once and again in our lifetime, no matter what may be our calling, things will be done as mean and base as if a brute should strike our mother

on the breast. Humanity is wronged past all bearing, justice and truth are insulted by their altars, purity is dragged down from its throne. Then our anger burns in us like a fire, and we strike out, and strike home. It is kept for these supreme uses, and must be. We must not get out our artillery to kill flies. Your noble man is a miser of his anger; only your spendthrift fritters it away. "Lord," the good Welshman prayed, "if our hearts are too hard, do thou soften them; and if they are too soft, do thou harden them by thy grace." So we may pray for a noble anger as the crown, in its true time and place, of all gentleness and goodness, and the love that never fails.

XI

Charles and Mary Lamb

A True Story

I WANT to say something to you this evening about the life of Charles Lamb; and to begin by saying, that such a theme must be its own apology to those who only know the man through a few jests everybody repeats, but which are by no means of the deep and searching sort Hazlitt had in his mind when he said, "Lamb's jests scald like tears." These jestlings, as he would have called them, were the first thing I heard or read from him in my youth, and might have been the last had not a gentleman, whose sight was failing, asked me to read for him as I found the time; and one of the books *he loved* best was the "Essays of Elia." So

I read the essays, I remember, with no idea at all of their sweet and subtle charm, and wondered how any man could care for such things as those. But two or three years after I had closed the book forever, as I thought, some seeds it had sown began to quicken in my mind, from here and there an essay, and especially those on "Chimney-Sweeps" and the "Decay of Beggars," and made me long to see the book again, after it had vanished with its owner, I knew not where. And so when I began to rise in the world, and was earning as much as eight dollars a month and "found," about the first money I could spare went for a copy of "Elia," which is now in a farmhouse away out in Colorado; and from that time "Elia" has been one of my choicest companions, and so dear to me that I can quite understand the feeling of as honest and good a man as I ever knew, who said to me once, "I love 'Elia' so well, that I feel tempted

to carry off every copy I lay my hands on." I would not like to say quite so much as that about my own feeling, and indeed do not think I can love "Elia" so well as my good old friend does; for I notice my own temptation seldom strays beyond the desire to borrow every copy I find in the hands of my friends, and never take it home again.

But loving the book so well as this even, you will not wonder that one should want to know all about the author, and find out, as near as may be, how that answers to the picture he draws of himself in these essays. For you are presently aware, as you read them, that the man is holding what one might call an experience-meeting with you, and that no word comes out of his heart blended with laughter and tears, which has not gone into it first through some experience as close as life and death. And I found this to be the truth when I came to

read the story of his life. Here was the man Charles Lamb, behind the mask of Elia, not unclothed but clothed upon. A man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; called to take the noblest part in as deep and sad a tragedy as was ever done, and failing in no line or accent from the moment when the curtain rises to the time it is rung down by the hand of death. A man with a few faults, and more failings he could confess to with as deep a contrition as you will find in the Psalms of David. A warning, if you will, as Burns was; but, like Burns, also a grand and sweet ensample, and whose very vices, as one said who knew and loved him, were nobler than some men's virtues. The man one thinks of in reading how Luther said once to his friend, "Go get drunk, and then you can tell me what such sins mean when you have felt their teeth in your soul;" and he of whom Landor sung when he was dead, —

"Cordial old man, what youth was in thy years,
What wisdom in thy levity, what truth
In every utterance of that purest soul!
Few are the spirits of the glorified,
I'd spring to earlier, at the gate of heaven."

Charles Lamb died in 1834, as the year was closing, at Edmonton by London, a place known to you and me through the diverting history of John Gilpin. And, if we could have gone there in the fall of that year, the chances are, we should have seen Mr. Lamb, as the neighbors called him, wandering along the lanes while the leaves were turning brown on the trees, and the mists were falling far and wide; for the splendid pillars of golden fire our maples rear against the azure here, are not seen in the mother-land, and if you had the maples there, you would not have the azure in which ours are framed.

A man who looks feeble before his time, for he is not yet threescore; and with that *pathetic* student's stoop in the shoulders, he

has not caught, I think, from bending over the old folios which were so dear to him, but from bending over the great ledgers, rather, in the India House, for thirty-three years. He called these his "works," these vast folios of profit and loss; and a friend of mine told me how he went to look at these ledgers a great many years ago, which were shown him with a fine courtesy, and how the porter who took them down for him, and dusted them, said, "We have had gentlemen from America before, sir, who wanted to see these ledgers, so you will excuse me, sir, for asking if Mr. Lamb was an American?"

A short and slender person you would have seen in those lanes, with what Thomas Hood called a pair of immaterial legs; a head of wonderful beauty, if you could see it bare, well set on the bent shoulders, with black curly hair in plenty, threaded through with gray; eyes of a soft brown, like that you

see in some gentle animals, but not quite of the same color, — odd eyes, you would call them; and a face of the finest Hebrew type rather than the Saxon. "But who shall describe his face," an old friend says, "or catch its quivering sweetness? Deep thought, shot through with humor, and lines of suffering wreathed with mirth." He would be dressed in black, also, of an old fashion, though the time was when he favored a decent gray; and when a friend asked him once why he wore such queer old clothes, he answered very simply, "Because they are all I have, my boy."

He would have a dog with him, also; a creature which answered, or rather did *not* answer, to the name of Dash, and would rush away wherever his wayward fancy led him, while he who should have been his master would stand still in deep dismay, calling to him, fearing he would get lost, and resolving *to teach him* better manners; only when the

rogue did return in an hour or so, his victim would be so glad he could not bear even to scold him, and so he had to send him away at last in sheer despair. So the gentle old man would walk about the lanes in those days, with Dash to torment him; turn in, perhaps, to the Bell, where John Gilpin should have dined, for a glass of ale; and then go home to the lodgings where he lived with his sister.

This sister depended on her brother so that he said very tenderly to her one day when he came home, "You must die first, Mary;" and she answered with a cheerful little laugh, "Yes, Charles, I must die first." But on a day not long after, as I make out, he fell, as he was walking alone, and was much bruised and shaken. He had said in a letter, not very long before, "God help me when I come to put off these snug relations, and get abroad in the world to come." And long before, "a new state of things staggers me. Sun, sky, and breeze, solitary walks and

summer holidays, the greenness of fields, and the delicious juices of meats and fishes, society and its good cheer, candle-light and fireside conversations, and innocent vanities and jests, and irony itself, — do we lose these with life? Can a ghost laugh, or shake his gaunt sides? And you, my folios, must I part with you? Must knowledge come to me, if it comes at all, by some awkward turn of intuition, and no longer by this familiar process of reading? Shall I enjoy friendship there, wanting the smiles and the faces I know, and the sweet assurance of a look?"

So he lived, this gentle and most sensitive spirit, all his life subject to bondage and the fear of death, as we have known others live of his noble and delicate mould. But after he got his hurt he did not know what had befallen him, and was only dreaming pleasant dreams of old friends and of some little festival he had in his mind; and so he passed away, and did not see death, for God

took him, while the sister who was to have gone first survived him almost twelve years.

He was born in London, as your fathers were blowing at the fires which flamed up at Lexington and on Bunker Hill.

His father was a lawyer's clerk in the Temple, where the boy passed the first seven years of his life close to the great tides that set in, as he tells us, from the east and west, in the very heart of the great city he came to love so well that he told Wordsworth once his mountains and lakes might hang for all he cared, and, when at last he went to look at them, found he was composing his mind and staying his heart, not at all on their glory and beauty, but on a famous ham and beef shop he knew of in the Strand.

He has drawn a portrait of his father as a man of "an incorruptible and losing honesty," and not only clerk to the old lawyer, but his good servant, dresser, friend, guide, stop-watch, and treasurer. The liveliest little

fellow breathing, he says, with a face as gay as Garrick's; a man Isaac Walton would have loved to go with a-fishing, and clever with his hands though he was small. For once when he saw a man of quality, so-called, insulting a woman, and came to her rescue, and the brute drew his sword on him, the little fellow wrenched the sword out of his hand, and mauled him soundly with the hilt.

They were very poor, these Lambs; and the undercurrent of rumor, which may go for what it is worth, is, that the children were neglected. But no word of this comes from Lamb, like those we have from another fine humorist, who shames himself and his genius by telling the story of his own hard lot as a child, and then draws the portrait of his father in Micawber very much after the manner of one in the Scriptures who mocked at his father's weakness and shame. He went to a sort of charity-school for his

education, Christ's Hospital, so called, a place in those days, of the old brutal British type, where they never spared the rod to spoil the child; staid there seven years, learning what they used to call the humanities; and had for his dear friends and companions Coleridge and Jem White, noble boys both of them, and dear friends all their lives. Jem wrote a book when he grew to be a man, which Lamb always said was full of genius. Yet nobody would buy it, or read it if they had even a dictionary to read instead. But Lamb could never understand why the whole world of London did not rush right away to buy that book; and whenever he found a copy in after-years on an old book-stall would buy it for sixpence, — all the man had the heart to ask, — and give it to some friend in the hope of making one convert at the least to the genius and grace of his old friend Jem White.

Coleridge, the inspired charity-boy as he

calls him, had the wine in him which needs no bush, and was dear to his heart as Jonathan was to David's. He says, to be sure, that Coleridge taught him all the corruption he ever knew which had not come by nature, likens him to an archangel a little damaged, and often wreaks on him the humor that scalds like tears. Still their love to the end was the fair rose which holds no worm i' the bud, but is perfect and entire.

When Lamb was about fourteen, they could afford to keep him at the school no longer: so he had to turn out, and help make the living, for the years had brought no release from the bitter pinch of poverty. There was a brother much older than Charles, who was doing well in the world and had only himself to care for; so he only cared for himself, being a man of fine tastes, and left the family to its doom. So he found work to do, the boy of fourteen, and became presently *the head* of the household, and its staff and

stay. Then in the course of time he saw the maid he could dream of as his wife, and worship from afar until it should please God to open the way to his great desire. And then, when he was just coming of age, a great tragedy opened, and changed the whole plan and purpose of his life.

They were living in a poor little place, to which they had moved for poverty's sake, — the old father who was passing into his second childhood, the mother who was an invalid, and helpless also, and the sister Mary who was ten years older than Charles. Mary was so burdened with the care and sorrow of it all, that one day, in a sudden fit of insanity, she clutched a knife, and, before the brother could reach her, stabbed her mother to the heart, wounded the poor old father also, and then was secured at a great risk of the brother's own life. It was insanity, the jury said at once at the inquest; and they knew this better than the jury, for

Lamb himself had been touched by it not long before, and shut up in an asylum. So Mary was sent there for her life, if it must be so but it was found presently, that these fits were fitful, coming and going with a certain premonition, when you came to understand them; and so she need not stay there, if those to whom she belonged would take her home and take care of her. The elder brother, who was thirty or so then, and well-to-do, with no one to care for still but himself, stood aloof. The youth rising toward twenty-one, and earning about a hundred pounds a year, stepped quietly to the front, and said, "I will take care of my sister. Let me have her home." So she came home; and the boy turned away from the shy, sweet dream of Alice, which had nestled in his heart, and took up the burden he was to bear for thirty-eight years to come, and wrote presently to a friend, "If Mary and the rest of us cannot live on what we have, we

deserve to burn at a slow fire; and I almost would sooner do that than let her go back to the asylum."

So they lived on what they had, until more came through the young man's steady striving, and the better berth he got in that India House. For he says, "I am jealous of human helps and leaning-places; and small treasures, as good John Woolman hath it, are enough to a contented mind." He burned the journal he had kept about his sweet shy love, and the poems he had written to his divinity but had never sent. The poor old man, his father, needed to be amused; and so he gave up the company of Coleridge of evenings, to amuse him, — the choicest company to Lamb in all the world; yet did not think it was a great thing to do, for this poor old dotard was his father. "And indeed," the young man says when he begins to be a bit cheerful again, "the wind is tempered beautifully to the shorn Lambs."

And twenty years after this, he says, speaking of Mary and himself, "We two house together, old bachelor and old maid, in a sort of double singleness; while I, for one, find no disposition to go out upon the mountains with the king's rash offspring, to bewail my celibacy. And we agree very well, too; but once when I spoke to her in a kinder voice than usual, she burst into tears, and said I was much altered (for the worse). I read my old Burton, and she reads stories with plenty of life in them, good and bad. She hath also been much cast among free-thinkers; but that which was good and venerable to her in her childhood, she loves still, and will play no tricks with her understanding or her heart."

So it came to pass, when the old father and Hester the servant were dead, and they were left alone, that the cross would change now and then into a crown, and joy take the place of the deep sorrow, which indeed

was hidden away by those who knew of it and loved them, and was never mentioned again until they were both dead. Mary Lamb also was a woman of rare and beautiful gifts. Hazlitt says she was the only woman he ever met who knew how to reason; but Hazlitt's experience of women was not fortunate. Wordsworth, with a finer ear, says, "I dwell not only on her genius, but on her rare delicacy and refinement."

They kept house together, and knew how to do this on a little, until more came to hand, as I said; and Mary knew what her brother loved to eat, and how he liked to have it done. And Coleridge—the archangel more than somewhat damaged by this time—clung to the brother and the sister, and they to him; so did Jem White, whose death, Lamb says, took half the fun out of the world and the sunshine. George Dyer also, simple as a child, to whom Lamb once whispered the great secret that as likely a man

as the prince-regent was the author of the Waverley stories, and George went and told Leigh Hunt also as a great secret; for in these freaks of humor, Lamb, who was the very soul of truth and honor, used to say, "I am not a matter of f-fact man, but a matter of l-lie man," and argued once that the truth was too good to be thrown away on everybody. And Bowles was their dear friend, who presented a Bible once to another friend with the inscription, "From the author, with his kind regards." And a schoolmaster, of whose school Lamb took charge once when the pedagogue had to go away and did not know what in the world he should do for a teacher; Lamb did not know what he should do *as* a teacher when he had got into the desk, so he gave the boys a whole holiday to their vast delight. And an artist who had to get out a series of portraits of great admirals for a magazine, but could not afford to hire a sitter; so Lamb sat for the whole

lot, which are still to be found with faces more or less of the Hebrew type. And a poor fellow to whom Lamb said with a blush, when he was getting to be easy about money, "Do you know, my boy, I have made my will, and put you down for so much, so I might just as well pay it now." Barry Cornwall also, a young man then, and not over well-to-do, was very dear to him. He was looking much cast down one day; and Lamb, suspecting it was money, or rather the lack of it, which troubled him, said, "Barry, my desk is all a maze of things I don't want, and there's a hundred pounds among 'em. Do take it, my boy, and relieve me of the care."

All the men he met, who had a queer twist in life or mind or fortune, went into his heart, and staid there; and all the men he heard or read of, no one else would entertain with so much as the crumbs of their sympathy. He had a good word for Judas

Iscariot, and pity for the man in the great sermon who built his house upon the sand, and for the five foolish virgins; but did not care much for the man who built his house on the rock, because it was clear he knew how to take care of himself, or for the five wise virgins who went in merrily to the supper, and left their companions weeping outside in the dark; while he was not quite clear that there was not a certain grain of nobility in Guy Faux that arch-traitor who would have blown up king, lords, and commons at one stroke; and had great pity also for a man he read of in the papers, who was taken up for sheep-stealing, because the sheep was taken too, and so the poor man lost his first and last chance at a mutton-pie. And Lamb imagined, moreover, what a fearful thing it would be, if, when his grace of Clarence had made his choice to be drowned in a butt of malmsey, it should not turn out to be that after all, but some other sort of wine.

One who was his friend and is ours sings:

"There is no music in the life
That sounds with empty laughter wholly;
There's not a string attuned to mirth,
But has its chord in melancholy."

Well, this is the secret of the humor which scalds like tears. The wind was tempered to the shorn Lambs, but now and then it smote them very sore. Mary was never cured from that awful threat of insanity which went and came, while the shadow staid always on their house and their life. So he could not leave her when he would take a holiday; it was so shameful, he said, to leave her, and go off and enjoy himself alone. So Mary would pack her trunk, and go with him, and always packed her strait-waistcoat to be ready for what might happen. And if they were at home they knew when the shadows began to deepen; and, like those children in the story we have all wept over in our day, it would befall, that

"When they saw the darksome night,
They sat them down and cried."

Then the brother would busk himself up bravely in his best, put on airs as of one who was on pleasure bent, and ask for a holiday; and I think they were delicate with him, and wise, and asked no questions. Then he would go home to Mary, and friends say they have met them stealing along by-paths toward the asylum, hand in hand, and weeping both of them, while Charles would be carrying the strait-jacket, and sometimes Mary would urge him to a run on those small immaterial legs, for she was aware that it might be midnight madness in a few moments, and so they would come to the doors quite out of breath. Then Mary would get well again, come home, and begin her housekeeping as if nothing had befallen. And in the Temple once, when they had taken rooms there, they lighted on a bit of rare good fortune Lamb would enjoy above all men. It was a small place and

cheap; and mousing round they found a blind door locked fast, managed to open the door, and then found some rooms beyond, nobody had ever heard of or suspected, took possession of these also, and so lived in great state, and were never able to pay any rent for them because they could not find any landlord to take it.

This is the story of Charles and Mary Lamb, until at last on a day we see the old man in the lanes by Edmonton with his dog Dash, and then sitting by the fire of an evening, listening to his old host who always told the same old story of the way he rode into Salisbury in his rash youth on a *mad* horse; as grand and touching a story — not as I tell it, but as the brother and sister lived it — as was ever written with a pen; the story of the boy and man, —

> "Whom neither shape of danger could dismay,
> Nor dream of tender happiness betray;
> Who, doomed to walk in company with pain,
> Turned the necessity to glorious gain."

I shall say something to you on another evening about good books: I name Charles Lamb's essays and letters, and the story of his life, now, among the best. You may not be of my mind at once, about the essays, as I was not of my friend's mind. But if once you catch his secret, and wander with him wherever the humor takes him, watching the life he touches with a sympathy something like his own, a life which never breaks forth into the bluff and hearty freedom you find here and there in Shakspeare, when laughter is lord of the day; and is never "dipped in baths of hissing tears, or riven with the shocks of doom," for this would be barking too near his own experience, but is replete with quaint humor and wisdom, deep as the deepness of life, — if you can do this, you will read Charles Lamb to your heart's delight; not now in your youth alone, but in your old age.

XII

The Companionship of Good Books

Rev. x. 8-11.

I HAVE felt it would be a good thing to say a word now about the companionship of good books, in the hope that it may be of some special worth to the young men and women who would love to win companions and friends that will never desert them in any trouble, while they will deepen and sweeten all their joys.

There is a lovely touch in a recent life of Southey, who, of all men in his time, was a lover of good books. How, in his old age, the splendid brain, which had done so much good work, gave way, and he could read no more; but the writer says he would still walk about his library, and lay his hand on those

that were dearest to him, one by one, as you would lay yours on the shoulder of a lifelong friend.

They were all in a mist to him now; he could see them no more with the old clear vision; but he knew they were there, and loved them; and they could speak to him no more in the old sweet fashion, but there was some echo in them still of the lifelong joy. And the good scholar's story may be yours and mine. We win these good companions and friends, and it is no fault of theirs if our power to commune with them fails; they are always the same, and though every other friend deserts us, yet will not they.

Mrs. Browning says we never call the child fatherless who has God and his mother; and I would never call the man friendless who has God and good books. I went down into the Yorkshire wolds the other summer, where Sydney Smith lived once, who is one of these

friends of mine. I did not find him there, and found it hard to imagine how he could live there so long and still stay so sunny-hearted; but he was waiting my return home, radiant as ever with wit and wisdom. I went to Coleridge's grave once on Highgate Hill. He is not there, he is risen; and I see him and commune with him whenever the humor takes me. I sat in Shakspeare's chair in Stratford upon Avon, so they said, and read the only letter we know of ever addressed to him, — a letter from a man who wanted to borrow money; so curiously do the old times chime in with the new, — and wandered over the pleasant leas to Shottery, where he found his wife, alas! And it was all as lovely as a midsummer night's dream, but I could not make the mighty master live in Stratford as he lives with me.

So I might name a little host of these companions and friends I have been able in all these years to gather about me, — poets,

philosophers, essayists, story-tellers, sermon-makers, theologians, and saints. I cannot stop to name them all, but there they are, always waiting for me, in that spiritual body we call a book. Isaac Walton says, "I go a-fishing," and then I say I go too; I go with Wordsworth also on the "Excursion," and to Bolton, familiar to me from my child-hood, to watch the White Doe. It is enough on this head. My companions and friends may be yours also, and fill your life with the pleasantness and profit which have come to mine.

Nor do I find it very hard to see how such books as I have in my mind should come to be counted among our best treasures, when we note how they come to us, and at what a cost. Men and women come into this world of ours with the supreme gift in them, it may be, we call genius, and begin at length to write these books. If you *should* ask them how it was done, the great-

est and best of them would not be able to tell you. The old Hebrew prophets, when they have a great and moving word to say, are apt to begin with, "Thus saith the Lord," because they feel sure it is not said by them so much as through them; and this, I imagine, must be the feeling of any man or woman of a true genius when they do their great things. They are not their own masters; they are "all possessed," as we say, sometimes, and must write the poem or the chapter because they cannot help it.

Then there is another truth touching what they do. They have been watching this world and life of ours with the seer's eyes; so while we see only what lies on the surface, possibly, they see what lies away down within the heart of things, and every thing goes into the quick of their life, — all sights, all sounds, all events, all fortunes, — and give them in turn the keenest delight or misery. These seem to me to be the conditions of

the purest genius; and when the true time comes, in which they can no more help themselves, shall I say, than the lightning can help its flash, the power possesses them we call inspiration, and they pour out the treasure they have gathered, into their book.

So the books come to us which hold the heart captive, and so these have come to me, my choicest companions and friends. It is a divine passion in them to sing their song, to tell their story, or to open their heart to us in some other noble way, which lies within all the great books I ever read or heard of. This is the choicest wine of their life, the gold made fine in the fires of their genius,—the report they make to us of what they have seen, we cannot see; and heard, we cannot hear. These are the books also, that have to bide their time before they can reveal their finest worth, like the wine we hear of in the cellars of kings and millionnaires, which grows more precious through

the lapse of the years; and yet not through the years alone, because they will turn your poorer vintage to mere vinegar, but because the secret lies in the genius of the grape. Such, as I think of it, is the genesis of the greatest and best books I would commend for your choicest companionship,—books Charles Lamb thought might be best read after you had asked a blessing, as you do on some rare and beautiful family festival.

Then I think we should always bring some such spirit to the reading of these books as their authors brought to the writing, or we shall miss their finest secret and sweetest satisfaction. My reading must not be so much work to be done, for the sake of so much worth, when I commune with these choice companions and friends. They have brought me the best there was in their mind and heart, and I must bring them the best there is in mine. I may devour what they bring me greedily, if it happens to suit my

taste, and think I have got all the good of it; but no such spirit in the reader will ever find the true worth of a good and great book. Old readers know this as we know our paternoster. Your mind needs to be as purely alive to read, as my author's was to write; and you must take far more time, it may be, to exhaust such books, than the writers took to fill them. I speak only of the best and finest now, not of those you can read as you crack a nut, and then toss them aside. There are plenty of these, but I say the best and choicest reading must cost about what it comes to. No man can be dead-headed on this line of the best; and if he tries, the line will not be responsible for damages.

But here again I must slip in a caution. There are books which seem as sweet as honey to the taste, we can read with an ever-growing appetite, and think we thrive *on them*; yet such reading shall be like

those subtle poisons the young peasants take, as you may have heard, in some parts of Austria, to make them look plump and rosy; but as they have always to make the drug a little stronger, or it will lose its virtue, the result is that they either die suddenly of an overdose, or grow old and haggard before they come to their prime.

There are other books, again, that stimulate you just as wines do, of which you can sip slowly, feeling the glow and glamour of them, to be aware by and by that you want something which holds a fiercer fire, and will have it. Well, you get it; and the result may be a delirium tremens of the spirit, sad and woful as that of the body, and with a still more frightful ending.

And there are books, again, we can read as men take opium. They seem to relieve the pain, or shut out the desolation, and to bring visions which seem like those of heaven: only the woe which follows such reading is

greater than that you would stay. Now, to read books like these again and again, and make them your companions and friends, is one sure way toward the pit. It is far worse than just to devour and have done with them, if you will insist on eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; because there is a hope, if you just devour them, that the things will turn you so sick of soul as to work their own cure; but in a slow, leisurely, lingering assimilation of such poison, there is time for it to find the minutest channels and choicest fibre of your life.

On the other hand, there are books we may devour in any quantity, that will do no harm except to take up our time, and prompt the question, Will a man fill himself with the east wind? Books which are very much as when our children pop their corn, and dash it over with a little sugar; books which are *only* what the sea-foam is to the sea; the

beaten syllabub of book-nurture, of which no harm can come to us save the reflection that naught to naught can never make the least fraction of one. Still I slip in a saving clause, also, with my caution, to say: There is such a wide difference in this human nature of ours, that, except when we touch the best and worst books, it is neither easy nor safe to lay down dogmas for reading, and say what you must or must not do. I have known a man to whom sweet milk was like poison; another, who could not touch meat; and still another, to whose curious constitution an egg *was* like a scorpion. It is only saying that in books, also, one man's meat may be another man's poison. But with these cautions, I come now to what I take to be a fair criterion, by which I can judge for myself what books may be bad for me to read, and then, what I may take to my heart for dear companions and friends.

If, when I read a book about God, I find

it has put Him farther from me than He was before; or about man, that it has put me farther from him; or about this world I live in, that my book has shaken down on it a new look of desolation, turning it into a sort of desert; or about life, that it has made life seem less worth living; or about moral principles, that they are not so clear and strong in my heart as they were when this man began to open his mind to me: then I know, that on any of these cardinal things in our human life, — my relation to God, to my fellow-man, to the world I live in, and to the great moral principles on which all things rest and turn, — to me, this is not a good book. It may chime in with some appetite I have, and be as sweet as honey to my taste; but it is not my book. Or, it may be food for another. I cannot dogmatize here. I only know this: how in these great first things, if the book I read touches them at all, it shall touch them for my help and

uplifting, or else I must toss the book aside, and have done with it. I companion only with those that can do this for me; the grain and grist of my reading must be sound and healthful. Here I *must* be a little selfish, and see that I get so much good by so much reading. I want bread, milk, meat: I do not want brandy or opium or hasheesh.

Or, again, let the book touch, as so many do, the powers and passions of our common human nature, and as I read let me find that the book tends to rouse these good servants but bad masters, my passions, and to give them a certain mastery over my principles, or in the relations of our life to make these relations less sweet and true between the man and woman, and start questions which, in their so-called solution, are so often only the skeleton-keys to pick the safeguards of virtue, rather than the strong and sure bolts to keep them, — then these are not good

books for me, or wholesome companions and friends.

And those are not good books for the youth of our Republic, which bemoan the advancing and opening age as less hopeful and happy than those that are gone, or fill me with splendid dreams of what I will do some day, but paralyze my hand and heart toward the humble striving of this day in this year of our Lord. Milton says I must "have a vigilant eye how books bemean themselves, and if they are proven evil I must imprison them, and do sharp justice on them as malefactors. For books are not dead things, but contain a potency of life as active as that soul-progeny they are."

So it follows, that, in taking good and noble books to my heart, these shadows so far must help me toward the light. Common fame can do something to guide me in my reading, but not much. Criticism can do something also; and it is a comfortable doc-

trine a dear friend of mine holds, that if you want to find the last good book you must not be over-troubled, you are sure to hear of it or find it in your hand within a year. These things may all help us, — common fame, criticism, and the good-will of those who are watching for the best, and find no finer pleasure than in telling me of some happy "find." But the proof of the book lies still in the reading. If it be in religion, and brings God nearer to my heart and life; if it be in humanity, and brings me nearer to the world's heart and life; if it be in science or philosophy, and makes this world glow to me with a new and nobler grace; if it be a poem, or a story, a book of adventure, or history, or of biography, and I feel it makes me more a man, more sincere and trusty and true, — then no matter who wrote it, or what men say about it, that is a good book for *me*, and may become one of those companions I want to keep all my life, and love.

So it is no superstition, but a clear human instinct, which makes our Bible what it is to us and has been so long, — the great divine book of the world. Let our theories of inspiration be what they may, this is the book in which prophets and apostles, poets and psalmists, saints and martyrs, and the great Divine Teacher have told us what lay deepest in their heart. The things are there they caught fresh from heaven, the things that stormed them surging through their souls in mighty tides, or entranced them by their matchless music, and the things they fought for and suffered for, and the man is there within the Word. But to get at the heart of this book, of all the books I know of, we must not rush through the chapters as if we were eating a railroad dinner. We must watch and wait for its meanings to come out and shine on the sorrows and joys, the perplexities and the confidences, which are one *with* the pangs of which they were born.

"It is the one book," Thomas Carlyle says, "in which, for thousands of years, the spirit of man has found light and nourishment, and an interpreting response to whatever was deepest in his own nature." I think he is right, and that the Book rests on no man's say-so, but on its own wonderful worth to man; and so I count it first among those I would make my own dear companions and friends.

May I not say one word, as I close, about novels and novel-reading, because this has come to be a grave question for young men and women to ponder who would only read the best books? I have always loved to read a good bright story, and do still. And John Stuart Mill says, "It is not what our youth can repeat by rote, but what they have learned to love and admire, which forms the character;" and commends the stories that fill the imagination in our early days with pictures of heroic men and women as good for this good purpose. So they are; and it

I may mention one author in particular, the stories of Sir Walter Scott seem to me to stand first. Bishop Stanley, father of the good Dean, says, "They have won the right to stand on the same shelf with Shakspeare," and I agree again with the bishop. I read a round dozen of these stories still year by year, with all the old delight; and not for the sake of knights like Ivanhoe, and ladies like a dozen one could name, but more for the sake of his peasants and serfs and beggars who grow noble as he touches them with his magic wand. I dwell on these stories because they dwell *in* me. Sydney Smith, who loved a good story, says, "The main question in a novel is: Does it amuse you?" I think we should look for more than that, as we should in an amusing companion who would still make black white or a sort of silver-gray.

Some one says novels are week-day sermons, and their writers week-day preachers,

who should always take us into clean and good company, and I like that canon. Things have come to a bad pass with us, when we smuggle our company into the house on the sly, and hide them in closets, for fear the mothers and sisters or the wife and children will see them. My best and truest manhood bids me wash mine hands in innocency when I read a novel. I count it for pure worth, therefore, that I early loved to read Charles Kingsley's stories also, and read them still. They are healthful as his Devonshire moors, and bracing as a splendid winter's day.

And I do not agree with Mr. Taine that our steadfast insistence on clean stories in England and America is only a mask Frenchmen disdain to wear. I tell you it is the faith of men who propose to stand by the Ten Commandments, the instinct of the nations which are clasping hands to reach round the world; and it is the rule I would commend to you, and the instinct, above all others.

It is not healthy or wealthy or wise to sit up late or rise up early reading novels in which the main end of life in the hero seems to be to do a murder, and the heroine to blunder into bigamy. I would draw no narrow line. No book, Carlyle says, so it be clean, is to be lightly called worthless; for how knowest thou, he makes the writer say, that I am the silliest of mortals, and with my long ears I may not find readers with ears still longer, and may be the means of instilling somewhat under Providence better than they possess?

But you cannot make stories and novels serve as the text-books, finally, of a good, sound education in and for your life. If you could, there would be no more delightful place in the world than the schoolroom, learning your algebra to the twang of Cupid's bow. Novel-reading can never be more than a pleasant relaxation. The serious and anxious work of life always waits to be done all

the same. And so may I not say that while I am glad I read such noble stories as I have named in my youth, and many more, if I had done that and no more I think you would not have wanted me to talk to you now on the companionship of good books.

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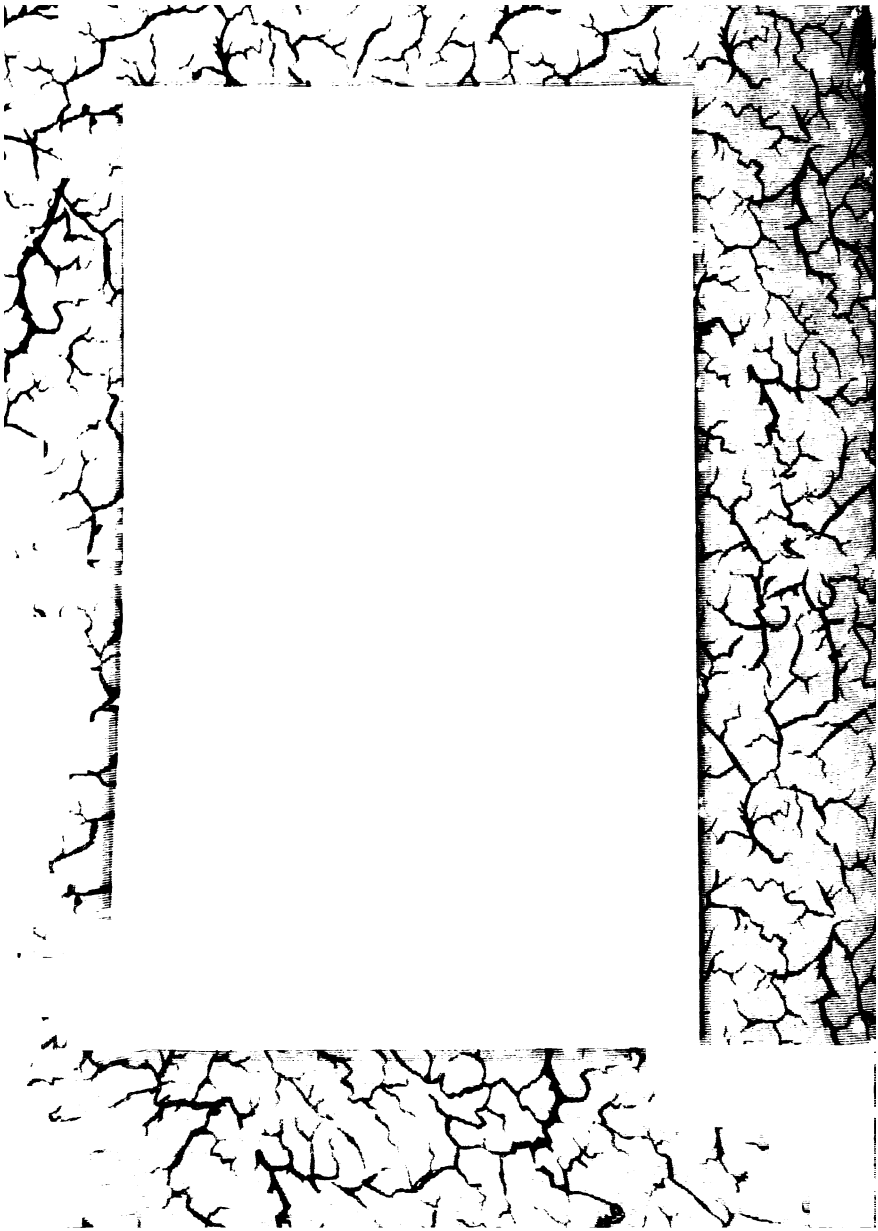

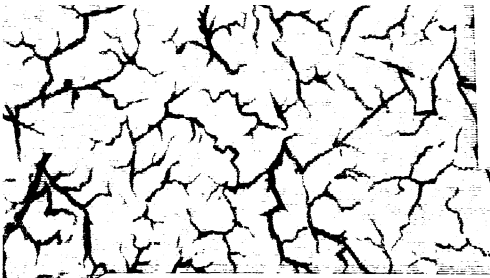

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